

GUIDELINES FOR EDITORIAL PROCEDURES AND ETHICS

The **Conference of Historical Journals** offers this descriptive guide to editorial practices that are generally followed by historical journals. By taking, for the most part, a descriptive rather than a prescriptive approach to the everyday details of scholarly periodical publishing, these guidelines are intended to give both editors and authors a sense of what each party may expect from the other in the publication process. Because these guidelines embrace the practice of most historical journals, they are necessarily less precise than the rules and procedures that define the work of any one journal. Authors therefore need to clarify the practices followed by the journal that is considering their work. The sequence of topics in this set of guidelines roughly follows the stages of the publication process, with articles discussed first, book reviews later.

1. MAKING SUBMISSIONS

Many journals print in each issue a brief description of the format they expect authors to follow in preparing manuscripts. They may require, for example, that manuscripts be typed on nonerasable plain paper, be submitted with one or two extra copies, and be accompanied by return postage if, in the event of rejection, the author wishes the manuscript returned. Many require both text and footnotes to be double-spaced, with the notes following the text and not at the foot of the page. Some specify a maximum or minimum length for manuscripts and comment on the acceptability of tables and illustrations. Many identify the published guides, such as the Chicago Manual of Style, that they prefer for style and documentation form. Some journals have their own versions of such guides and will provide copies on request.

By preparing manuscripts in accordance with a journal's stated guidelines, authors can help speed along both the evaluation of their submissions and the processing of them once they are accepted for publication. Some editors will send a sample issue on request; all editors welcome inquiries from authors who are in doubt about any of these ground rules. Most historical journals accept manuscripts in machine-readable form, either on computer diskettes sent through the mail or by means of Internet connections. The reason for doing so is straightforward: if the journal can transmit an article directly to its own or its service bureau's computer application, it can save a considerable amount of the composition cost. Authors should communicate with the journal about the compatibility of their word-processing application with the journal's (or its service bureau's) applications. Authors should also mention whether they have the means to transmit the manuscript electronically if the journal accepts on-line transmissions.

Authors should keep in mind that even when a journal is able to make use of electronic manuscripts, they are generally required to submit one or more hard copies of the manuscript. Although the copy editors and typesetters will work mainly with the electronic manuscript, the hard copy is important for copyediting use, for reference in case text is somehow lost from the electronic version, or if the journal decides to scan electronically the manuscript to a diskette.

It is uncommon among historical journals to pay authors for articles. Prospective authors should assume that they will receive no financial payment unless the journal in question clearly stipulates otherwise.

2. MULTIPLE SUBMISSIONS AND PREVIOUS PUBLICATION

Most historical journals will not entertain a manuscript that is being considered by another journal at the same time. In acknowledging receipt of manuscripts, some warn explicitly against multiple submissions. Because it is widely disapproved, authors should assume that the practice of multiple submission is unacceptable unless a journal has made an explicit statement to the contrary.

In some instances authors submit articles that have already appeared, in a slightly altered or abbreviated form, in conference proceedings, edited books, or occasional papers. Authors should inform editors of this fact. If there is any question about whether the submission is "new," they should enclose a copy of the previously published version. Many journals decline to publish articles that have already appeared in a similar form, no matter how limited the circulation of the original publication. Some journals consider the posting of a work on a Web site "previous publication" and decline to consider such articles. Authors should indicate in their cover letter whether their essay has been shared on a LISTSERV, posted on a home page, or is otherwise available electronically.

3. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Authors can expect a journal to acknowledge receipt of a manuscript as a matter of routine. Because manuscripts and acknowledgments do get lost on occasion, an author who does not receive such acknowledgment within a reasonable time, no more than three weeks, should inquire.

4. INITIAL EVALUATION

Editors make an initial judgment of manuscripts as they are received to determine whether they merit further evaluation. If an editor rejects a manuscript at this stage, the author normally does not receive a detailed critique. The most common reasons why articles are rejected at this point are that they do not meet the scholarly standards demanded by the journal, their subject matter is

inappropriate to the scope of the journal, or although competent and relevant, they address too narrow a topic. Authors are expected to acquaint themselves with the character and scope of journals to which they submit their work. If a particular manuscript clears this initial hurdle, the editor will usually send it to outside readers.

5. OUTSIDE READERS

Most historical journals do not accept manuscripts for publication without first submitting them to the scrutiny of readers outside the editorial office. These consultants may be members of the journal's editorial advisory board or scholars with no formal connection to the journal. Although the system of peer evaluation prolongs the time between submission and final decision, it is important to assuring both the expert assessment of manuscripts and the quality of articles accepted for publication.

In choosing readers, editors seek referees whose own publications have earned for them reputations as experts on the subject of the manuscript to be evaluated or who would have a useful perspective on it from the angle of their own related work. To the fullest extent possible, editors avoid choosing scholars known to be or to have been close associates of the author. At the same time, a given field of specialization may be so small that it is not possible to find qualified readers who are not well acquainted with the author.

6. BLIND EVALUATIONS

Most historical journals practice double-blind peer review. To help assure the impartiality of evaluations, most historical journals remove the name or other identification of the author from a manuscript, where this can be done without undue mutilation, before sending it out for evaluation. For this reason, it is helpful if authors place their names only on a separate title page. Similarly, editors normally send reports to authors without disclosing the readers' names, except when readers prefer to forgo anonymity, and sometimes as a matter of policy not even then. Readers ultimately learn the identity of authors whose work is published, but authors may never learn who read their manuscripts. Accordingly, an author of an accepted article may ask the editor to reveal the names of readers, especially if the critiques helped in revision of the article. In such cases, the editor will have to secure the readers' consent before revealing their identities. Some editors routinely decline such requests from authors, preferring to maintain the anonymity of the process even after publication.

7. LENGTH OF TIME FOR EVALUATION

Editors normally decide whether a manuscript will be sent to outside readers, and are able to secure them, within two weeks to a month of receiving the manuscript. The time it takes to receive the readers' reports varies from journal to journal and from manuscript to manuscript. The nature of the manuscript, the number of readers, and the length of time allotted are among the main determinants of the duration of this part of the process. Despite variation, most editors expect to have critiques in hand within two to three months after selecting willing readers, and certainly no more than six months. The editor will normally notify the author if a delay seems likely--if, for example, it proves hard to secure readers or if differing opinions among a first set of readers make it necessary to seek additional opinions.

Tardy readers are the most common cause of delay. Editors try to avoid this problem by sending reminders before too much time passes. When decisions are delayed, it is small comfort to authors to be reminded that readers are the unsung volunteer heroes of the evaluation process. Scholars who agree to read manuscripts should keep in mind, however, that this contribution ceases to be an act of collegial altruism when it is not performed in a timely fashion.

8. CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTANCE

When they have heard from a sufficient number of outside readers, editors must next decide what to do with a manuscript. They may reject it and offer little or no encouragement to believe that revision would improve its chances, reject it but encourage revision, accept it on condition that specified revisions are made, or in rare cases, accept it without revision. Because the range of contingencies is broad, editors try in their letters of decision to communicate clearly to authors the status or prospects of their manuscripts and the requirements for securing final, unconditional acceptance.

The form in which authors may expect the critiques of their work to appear varies considerably. Some journals provide a standard form for readers' reports. Others ask readers to submit evaluations, separate from their cover letters, to be forwarded to the author. Editors usually send readers' reports to authors of both accepted and rejected manuscripts. Editors may sometimes send summaries of outside reports. They also offer their own evaluations and suggestions.

In the case of acceptance, it is important that the editor indicate clearly how the comments are to be used in any revision, especially where the readers' reports offer, or appear to offer, conflicting advice. Before revising, an author should resolve any doubts about how to proceed by writing for further, clearer guidance. An author who agrees to acceptance of a manuscript for publication may not withdraw it from the journal except in extreme and unusual circumstances. Journals usually provide written contracts that spell out in detail the objections of both parties.

If the editor agrees with an author's wish to have maps, charts, or illustrations printed with the article, the author is normally expected to provide the maps and charts in camera-ready or electronic (computer disk) form and glossy prints of illustrations with accompanying credits and captions. Usually authors are expected to accomplish this at their own expense and to obtain all necessary permissions in writing. They should submit with their final manuscript a photocopy of each letter of permission necessary for use of illustrations. The editorial office usually assumes responsibility for permissions and fees only for those illustrations provided by the journal.

Editors assume that authors who quote extensively from primary or secondary sources have obtained written permission to do so. Some editors require authors to supply copies of letters granting permission to quote from manuscript collections. Authors should acquaint themselves with the guidelines that govern "fair use" of quotations from sources.

9. SCHEDULE FOR PUBLICATION

Editorial practice regarding two aspects of scheduling articles varies widely: when to assign an accepted article to the issue in which it will appear and whether to notify the author of that decision. Some editors never inform authors when their articles will appear; others are able to specify the issue at the point at which a manuscript is accepted and give the author that information at that time. Normally the editor will indicate approximately when the author may expect to receive the copyedited manuscript or galley proofs, if that is the journal's practice, usually some months after acceptance. At most journals a complete production cycle--from the day the editor submits the copyedited text of an issue to the typesetter until the day the issue is mailed to subscribers--usually takes three to five months.

10. COPYEDITING THE MANUSCRIPT

All scholarly journals copyedit accepted manuscripts for conformity to the journal's house style for footnote form, special terms, capitalization, and the like, as well as standard grammar and spelling. Sometimes the editorial staff will suggest larger changes, such as adding or deleting material, rewriting ambiguous passages, or rearranging sentences or paragraphs to improve the flow of exposition or argument. Often the editor will query the author about internal inconsistencies or apparent errors of fact. Some journals check footnotes and quotations to the extent possible. In most cases, editors give authors an opportunity to see the changes made before publication--in the form of copyedited manuscript, galley proof, or both.

11. PROOFREADING

Journals usually send the author a copy of the article as it has been set in proof. Sometimes this copy is at the galley proof stage, at which point the article consists of the unpaginated text and notes. Other journals send authors page proofs, in which the text, notes, illustrations, and tables have been paginated. Still others send a hybrid version that lies somewhere between galleys and page proofs. Some journals send no form of proof at all. Because time is important at this point in the process, the editor may ask the author to return the article, with changes marked in the margins, in a very few days. Editors characteristically request that authors limit changes to correcting grammatical or factual errors and refrain from making stylistic or substantive improvements because of the cost of revising the layout. Indeed, with some journals the cost of authors' alterations is borne entirely by the author.

12. OFFPRINTS OF THE ARTICLE

Each journal determines the number of copies of the issue or the number of offprints of the article that it will send free of charge to authors. Beyond that fixed number, authors may sometimes purchase additional copies. Authors who wish to order extra offprints should inquire no later than the point at which they receive proofs, as it is usually impossible for the editor to have extra copies printed after the regular order has been submitted to the printer.

13. INTERVAL BEFORE REPUBLICATION

Authors frequently submit portions of forthcoming books or other work in progress for publication in historical journals. The practice is generally considered a healthy one that enables journals to publish the best current scholarship and authors to present their findings at an early stage. Authors should know, however, that most journals place an important restriction on this practice; most will not entertain an article that will appear later, substantially intact, in a larger work unless a prescribed interval will have elapsed between publication in the journal and in the larger work. Editors commonly regard a year as the minimum such interval. Given this restriction, authors should alert their editors to the likely time of publication of a larger work that contains an accepted article or a substantial portion thereof. They should also inquire as to the form in which the editor requires the journal article to be acknowledged in the larger work.

14. ASSIGNING BOOK REVIEWS

Although most historical journals publish reviews of books, the volume of scholarly publishing is such that no journal, even one that devotes most of its contents to reviews, can give space to every serious history book in its field of interest. The disappointment of some authors is therefore inevitable. When a book is chosen for review, the editor seeks a reviewer knowledgeable about the subject, prescribes an approximate number of words, and states a deadline. By accepting an assignment, a reviewer tacitly accepts these stipulations. In most cases the only payment a reviewer receives is the copy of the book.

Editors usually avoid choosing as reviewer anyone thanked in the acknowledgments of the book or known to be closely associated with the author. Although editors welcome requests from scholars to have their names placed on file as potential reviewers, some, as a practice, decline a request from a scholar to review a particular book. Others welcome such specific requests. In many cases editors of historical journals make it a policy not to write book reviews for publication in the journals they edit. When an editor publishes a book appropriate to the review section of the journal, it is customary to ask someone not on the editorial staff to assign a reviewer.

Many journals send with the review copy a sheet outlining what is expected from the reviewer. These instructions typically call for the reviewer to summarize the book's topic and approach, assess its quality, and identify its contribution to scholarship. Most editors judge that the content of reviews, unless wildly irrelevant or libelous, is up to the reviewer. Journals occasionally publish letters written by authors, or others, in response to book reviews. In all such cases, the reviewer is given an opportunity to respond.

15. PROCESSING REVIEWS

The extent to which journals edit book reviews varies greatly. Some consider reviews a species of commissioned work that should be edited more lightly than articles. In these cases reviews are edited to conform to house style and to correct any obvious errors of fact. Other journals edit reviews much as they do article manuscripts. Some journals send reviewers a printer's proof of their review. As with articles, editors expect reviewers to refrain from making stylistic alterations at this stage and to limit changes to correcting errors of grammar or fact.

16. PUBLICATION OF BOOK REVIEWS

Book authors are naturally curious about the treatment their work will receive in the scholarly press. They sometimes ask editors of journals for the name of the scholar assigned to write the review. Although they will tell authors whether their books are being reviewed, most editors decline to reveal the reviewer's name before the issue is in press. Once the issue has been printed, the editor sends copies of each review to the publisher of each book. It falls to the publisher to send a copy to the author. Not all journals send published copies of reviews to reviewers. Contributors should inquire if they are uncertain about the particular journal's policy on this point.

17. COPYRIGHT AND REPRINT POLICY

Among historical journals policies governing copyright and republication vary greatly. Authors should enquire about a specific journal's policy before agreeing to acceptance of their articles.

Some historical journals send authors a standard copyright form; others do not. Most require the author to transfer copyright to the journal. All routinely give permission to authors for subsequent use of their own material in their own work without restriction.

Although no standard covers the practice followed by historical journals regarding republication of articles, authors should be aware that a fee is commonly levied on the publisher of previously printed material. Many journals set either a per-page charge or a flat fee and split the revenue equally between journal and author. Authors should clarify the question of republication fees at an early stage in the process of reprinting their work.

These guidelines are just that--guidelines that in general terms describe the day-to-day editorial practices employed by most historical journals. The Conference of Historical Journals does not determine editorial standards or ethics, nor is it prepared to arbitrate disputes. It expects editors, authors, and reviewers to settle differences among themselves. If such efforts fail, appeal can be made to appropriate agencies of the professional associations. Resort to such extreme measures will be rare, however, if authors and editors keep the channels of communication open and question each other whenever ambiguities arise. In particular, it bears repeating that practice varies greatly among historical journals. Editors can help avoid problems by conveying to authors as precise a description of the practices followed by their journals; authors similarly can help by using the subjects covered in the guidelines presented here to guide them in questioning their prospective editors to ensure that they understand the particular journal's practices.

Conference of Historical Journals, Spring 2000, Third edition, revised
University of Arkansas (<http://www.uark.edu/depts/arkhist/CHJ/Procedures.htm>)