

APS Committee on Scientific Publications: Annual Report 2020

The APS Committee on Scientific Publications (CSP) advises and assists the Editor-in-Chief and publisher and makes recommendations to the Board and Council regarding the operating philosophy, editorial policies and general strategy of the scientific publications of the Society. Here we provide a brief synopsis of the main issues discussed by the CSP during the last year. Many of the issues considered by the CSP are business confidential, so this public report will not address some of the matters that we discussed.

As would be expected, the Covid pandemic had a significant impact on CSP meetings this year. The two usual in-person meetings were replaced with longer virtual (Zoom) meetings, the first on May 5th, with two 2-hour sessions, and the second on Nov. 30 and Dec. 2nd, with one 3-hour session on each day. We had shorter (2-hour) teleconferences on February 10th, June 29th and Sept. 2nd.

The committee membership consisted of Spencer Klein (chair), Mette Garde (vice-chair until May, member thereafter), Sophia Economou (member; vice-chair after May), Aash Clerk (past chair), Jim Gates (APS Chair line representative), Mitchell Walker, Ania Jayich, Vivien Zapf and Jeff Nico. The two librarian representatives were Lisa Hinchliffe and Rick Anderson (until August).

Covid. Covid has had enormous impacts on APS publishing. It affected both operations and the journals' financial models. As the spread and impact of Covid became clear, the Ridge-resident staff had to shift from in-person work to remote operations. This was a major shift, but the staff seems to have managed it well with no significant impacts on article handling.

At the same time, Covid has had (and continues to have) an enormous impact on science worldwide. This led to concern about a possible drop in article submissions. At the same time, universities have come under enormous financial pressure, with library subscription budgets under intense scrutiny, leading to concerns about journal subscription income. These concerns were acute during the early days of the pandemic; the short-term fears have now receded somewhat, but the long-term concerns remain.

The committee felt that the APS publishing staff deserves much credit for their successful efforts toward in dealing with the multiple impacts of the Covid pandemic.

Open Access and New Journals. Open access will have a profound impact on scientific publishing, although the time scale is uncertain. The APS publishing staff has put much effort into developing a plan to respond, including by starting new high-quality selective open-access journal. These journals are acceptable to funders who require that their work be published in all-open-access journals (gold open access). The CSP embraces this earlier decision, but had some initial concerns about the speed with which new journals are started. It is very encouraging that the new journals are doing well, but scientific publishing is an increasingly crowded field, and future launches should be scrutinized in that light. The APS will also need to work to ensure that these journals are given the resources requires to start new journals while sustaining the excellence of the existing portfolio. Covid may exacerbate this resource squeeze by

complicating the lives of the existing editorial staff at the same time that it makes hiring more difficult.

Papers requiring institutional review boards. Over time, the scope of the APS journals has broadened, and they now publish a few papers that involve human or animal subjects, *i. e.* research which must be pre-reviewed by an institutional review board at the authors institution. Common practice is that this approval should be checked by the journals and specifically mentioned in the article. The APS has policies in place to ensure that this occurs, but these checks could be strengthened.