

**American Physical Society  
Committee on Scientific Publishing  
Report to the APS Council**

The CSP met three times in 2015: on Feb 9 in College Park, on May 14 in Ridge, and again on Oct 19 in Ridge. The committee also had a fourth meeting via teleconference in September. Below are summaries of the three meetings, which cover the main topics addressed by the CSP this year.

**The Feb 9 meeting:**

**Members:** C. Beausang (presiding) D. Blume, P. Capparello, A. Demkov, K. Kirby, J. Koplik, D. Meyerhofer, G. Sprouse, S. Su

**Advisors, Guests:** L. Bullis, M. Doyle, C. Giaccone, B. Hicks, D. Kulp, L. Longobardi, S. Maw (recording), J. Painter, J. Taylor

Kirby reported that the Articles of Incorporation and Constitution & Bylaws were officially adopted on November 15, 2014. The Publications Oversight Committee was renamed the Committee on Scientific Publishing. Mac Beasley was appointed interim treasurer. A new position of Publisher has been created and the ideal date of filling the position is June 2015.

Kirby noted that the role of the CSP is that it “advises on” editorial policy rather than “oversees” it. Members felt that the 4-year term is appropriate and should not be changed. Kirby brought up the subject of appointing Council members but the members felt that the CSP brings an important “outsider” viewpoint. Beausang noted that Kirby and Sprouse are non-voting members of both the Board and Council, so they are sufficient representation. A suggestion by Bader to bring in representatives from other scientific societies was countered by Kirby, who pointed out that antitrust and confidentiality issues may arise in doing so. Beausang recommended and Sprouse and Kirby agreed that the CSP be given specific questions to address going forward. Meyerhofer suggested two-day meetings but Demkov pointed out the difficulty in this during the school year. Kirby agreed one day is sufficient but longer meetings can be arranged if needed. Beausang wondered if more meetings might be preferable and Sprouse noted that a third meeting could be added, perhaps via videoconferencing (BlueJeans) for convenience.

Meyerhofer asked for an update on the Swets bankruptcy and Hicks informed the group that only a few of our institutional subscribers had prepaid some of their subscriptions to Swets. We negotiated with six affected institutions to give subscription discounts ranging from 10% to 100%, depending on tier, time of notification, amount prepaid, etc. Hicks noted we are still vulnerable since we cannot insure against loss and we cannot require institutions to insure themselves.

Kirby presented the APS finances in which she reported APS is in a strong position financially, with about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of revenue coming from publications. She also noted that Open Access is not yet a significant factor in APS finances, but if a Gold OA model were adopted, tiers 4 and 5 would pay

up to 20 times more than they do for their current subscriptions. A \$2 payment per download model would yield the same results.

Sprouse reported that the journals are healthy and well respected.

The loss of some top papers to *Nature* was discussed. *Nature* released an index that ranks institutions based on publication in certain journals and included PRA, PRB, PRD and PRL, despite that fact that APS declined to be included. Sprouse asked if APS should protest this and the consensus was no; to do so would bring more attention to the index. The recommendation was to be more proactive in publicizing other measures of scientific productivity. Suggestions to do this included APS creating its own index, highlighting our mission to disseminate knowledge (not make profit), and creating more outreach.

Open Access was discussed along with the fact that if authors have to publish in a gold OA, PRX is the only PR option. Other options discussed were to make parallel PR journals that are gold OA with the same review process and start a new broad scope OA journal.

APS did not join SCOAP3 because of concerns about the business model but instead made a deal with CERN to make our 2015 and 2016 CERN papers freely available.

Painter noted that libraries have budget concerns regarding replacing print journal backfiles with online access. She also noted that buying individual articles via a pay per download system might become the preferred method of access for libraries.

Doyle gave an overview of projects underway: website update (journals, *Physics*, librarian portal), assessing our performance, taxonomy to replace PACS, improving Supplemental Material, CHORUS, strategic travel and journal marketing.

Kulp gave an overview of PRApplied, which is doing as expected for a new journal. Now numbers of submissions are smaller but quality is higher. Impact factor is coming in 2016 and should give a boost.

Kulp discussed the format of the visiting committee review and noted it has been working well. The PRB committee will be coming March 23-24, 2015 and will be asked to consider scope, selectivity, RWER, increased quality, relationship with PRApplied, 5-year vision and messaging.

### **The May 14 Meeting:**

**Members:** S. Bader, C. Beusang (presiding), D. Blume, P. Cappellaro, J. Koplik, D. Meyerhofer, S. Su

**Advisors, Guests:** P. Dlug, M. Doyle, C. Giaccone, L. Gala (Librarian), K. Kirby, D. Kulp, L. Longobardi, S. Maw (recording), J. Painter (Librarian), H. Rozenfeld, J. Taylor

In her report of the CEO, Kirby discussed the resignation of EIC Gene Sprouse, citing his unhappiness with the changes to the EIC position that resulted from corporate reform. The search

for a publisher is moving forward and the job description was finalized. A pre-search committee was formed to define the new EIC job description and a search committee will be appointed in August. Kirby noted that the publisher and the EIC would work closely together. Discussion was had about concerns about not diminishing the roles of publisher or EIC in favor of the other. Su asked if whether lead editors should report to the EIC and Kirby and Kulp both agreed this is a question to ask as the job description is being defined. The timeline to define the EIC role was discussed, with Kirby assuring the group that it will be discussed at the June Editorial Board retreat and more time can be taken, if needed.

Painter encouraged APS to continue to keep subscription prices low, with annual increases of no more than 6%. Kirby noted that APS is very aware of library budget issues. Kulp confirmed that any increases to the APC would be made gradually.

Kulp gave a report on the PRB visiting committee. Their conclusions were to not chase the Impact Factor and maintain brand and reputation by focusing on scientific merit, remaining selective, keeping high referee standards and including papers with potential long term impact. Kulp asked for feedback on the current format of the review process and received mostly positive responses, with Bader suggesting perhaps a longer meeting of 2 ½ days and a shorter cycle of 3 years.

The possibility of a new fluids journal was discussed. Questions to be answered include, why fluids and why a new journal, which journals would compete, start-up and operation costs, risks (for both launching or not launching) and future repercussions for PRE and other journals. Several suggestions and concerns were voiced including waiting for a publisher before proceeding, new journals are best started in a new field and not an established one like fluids and possible increases in subscription costs. Doyle noted that if a community feels as though they do not have a journal “home”, APS needs to respond.

Kulp reported on negotiations regarding SCOAP3. APS has been invited to join the next round of SCOAP3 bidding, primarily for PRD papers, but there are concerns such as long-term sustainability, time consuming renegotiation of contracts, reversibility, alienation of broader PRD community and the fact that we are negotiating with CERN, not SCOAP3.

Kulp presented the pros and cons of niche journals vs. comprehensive journals. Bader raised the idea of specialized article packages and Kulp and Doyle agreed this should be explored. Doyle noted that the author’s viewpoint might be more important than a reader’s, as authors like niche journals. Bader suggested an advantage of broad scope journals is that they can expand to accommodate new fields and if those fields “cool off”, there is no adverse effect.

A presentation was given on the advantages of starting a broad-scope open access journal. Open access journals offer diversification of income, a place for mid/bottom-tier papers, cost-effectiveness, expansion into new fields, a platform for innovation and a home for all communities APS serves. Some members rejected the idea of a broad-scope open access journal, suggesting it would be second rate and a place for “bad” papers.

Beausang summarized the CSP meeting with Managing Editors and listed some of the Managing Editors' main concerns:

- Top level down lack of communication
- Not being asked to participate in decision making relevant to editorial matters
- Understaffing/resource issues
- Lack of editorial representation at upper levels
- Confusion about the strategic vision for APS
- Concerns that APS is moving from societal-based model to a commercial model
- Concerns about the EIC and Publisher not being located at Ridge

**A Teleconference Meeting was held on September 10 regarding the new Fluids journal.**

In August, committee chair C. Beausang stepped down from the committee. S. Su accepted to chair CSP for the rest of the year.

**Members:** S. Bader, D. Blume, P. Cappellaro, A. Demkov, J. Koplik, D. Meyerhofer, S. Su (presiding).

**Advisors, Guests:** D.J. Bukman, M. Chesnek, P. Dlug, M. Doyle, J. Duncan, C. Giaccone, B. Hicks, D. Johnson, K. Kirby, D. Kulp, L. Longobardi, S. Maw, J. Taylor

The committee heard several presentations regarding the possibility for APS to launch a journal focused on fluid dynamics. After a long Q&A the committee went in executive session. The result of this discussion was transmitted directly to the APS board and council.

**The October 19 Meeting:**

**Members:** S. Bader, D. Blume, P. Cappellaro, A. Demkov, J. Koplik, D. Meyerhofer, S. Su (presiding)

**Advisors, Guests:** M. Chesnek, P. Dlug, M. Doyle, C. Giaccone, L. Gala (Librarian), B. Kern (Librarian), K. Kirby, D. Kulp, L. Longobardi, S. Maw (recording), J. Painter (Librarian), J. Taylor

**Editorial Staff:** A. Begley (PRB), D. Brodbar (PRST-AB, PRST-PER, RMP), D. J. Bukman (PRE), U. Heller (PRD), L. Miao (PRX), T. Pattard (PRA) R. Schuhmann (PRL), J. Thomas (*Physics*), C. Wesselborg (PRC)

The report of the CEO revealed an excellent candidate has been offered the position of Publisher and has given verbal agreement. The search for an EIC continues and Kirby noted that the location and workload of the EIC is flexible and this allows the possibility of a remote, part-time EIC. Future direction of APS, with regard to expansion of physics areas, membership growth and Open Access global evolution, will be important for the EIC and Publisher to consider. A discussion about Open Access followed and included the possibility of APS switching to an author-pays model. APS is in a good position for this transition while keeping APCs low. Kirby

reassured the group that OA would not affect journal structure. Bader raised the point that APS must consider how to accommodate authors from developing countries who have few resources and funding.

The committee approved a new CSP Charge.

Longobardi presented the PRB review recommendations, which included a focus on physics or physical insight as well as on potential impact on condensed matter and materials physics research. They also recommended collaboration with EBM or RWER, sending more explicit rejection letters, sending “split” reports to all involved referees, education referees in an initial email, promoting Rapid Communications, creating separate rapid journals and creating a new Materials journal. The idea of a new Materials journal was met with enthusiasm.

Bader brought up having a “cascade” model and second tier journals and some of the other members are strongly against this idea. Longobardi noted that this is an ongoing discussion and needs to be closely studied. Doyle added that there are other models for second-tier journals, e.g. PLOS One.

Concerns about ResearchGate were discussed. ResearchGate uses questionable, aggressive marketing techniques and illegally uploads to their site. Legal costs and bad publicity are some negative consequences of taking legal action. APS, however, may have to become involved if ResearchGate becomes profitable.

The librarian reported on her decision to rely on document delivery and interlibrary loans, instead of large package subscriptions. She also reported on aggressive tactics used by one publisher when she cancelled a subscription.

Kulp gave the report of the Editorial Director and mentioned topics such as the PRX lead editor search and the dropping of the words “special topics” from the names of PRST-AB and PRST-PER. These title changes may result in loss of impact factor and cause citation tracking problems. Kulp added that the other PR journals were being reregistered as well and this will not affect IF or citations. The launch of PRFluids was passed by the Board and Luigi Longobardi was announced as Project Manager and Journal Manager during the transition. Other issues were raised including expected size of PRF (60-70 papers in the first year), inclusion of lab-on-a-chip papers (yes) and how the overlap between PRF and PRE will be handled. PRE will keep its core fluids/physics scope, but PRF will include fluids research that is interdisciplinary. PRF will be hybrid Open Access. Kulp explained the FASTR bill and its implications. Meyerhofer suggested charging non-APS members higher APCs than members.

Doyle presented an update on current projects. Our DOE funded articles published after 8/1/14 are being made available 12 months after their pub date. The replacement for PACS, will be available for editors to tag incoming articles in the first half of November and in January 2016 for authors through the submissions server. Editorial guidelines are complete and implementation is underway.

Editorial policies were discussed with Managing Editors. It was brought to Bader's attention that Murray Peshkin received a rejection letter stating that "we generally do not allow Comments from referees involved in the reviewing process". Schuhmann stated that rejecting Comments on a paper from a referee of the paper is not, in fact, PRL policy and that each case is decided individually. In response to being asked why there is a policy against allowing Comment on Comments, Schuhmann explained that the purpose of Comments is to point out a specific issue and allow the author to respond, not to create a long-term discussion. Also, there was some concern about Assistant Editors rejecting papers without review. Kulp explained that all Assistant Editors have PhDs, are knowledgeable in their fields, and consult with other editors or EBMs before making their decisions. A letter to Peshkin is being prepared.

The State of the Journals revealed that growth has been stagnant, the majority of submitted papers are non-US, submissions are down and we are highly cited (~30% of physics cites) but dropping. Begley and Schuhmann noted that it seems that the quality of papers is higher. Even though submissions have dropped, the number of papers highlighted has remained the same. Suggested factors for why the rate of submissions to PRB flattened out from 1994 to 2002 included a change in PRB scope, the limiting of submissions and the rapid growth of physics research in China around 2000. Miao highlighted the fact that editors have visited top tier institutions in China and made good connections. She also noted we have an editor based in China doing outreach and the number of referees from China is growing.

Members discussed the possibility of a second tier journal. While the group acknowledged that this type of journal would have advantages in growing international markets and be enjoyed by authors, we still need to consider whether or not we have enough editorial resources to accept more papers and ensure a second tier journal does not dilute the Physical Review brand. We also have to consider what readers want.

Blume asked the editors what they see as the biggest challenges at the moment. Begley noted, and Bukman agreed, that a lack of long-term strategy on niche publishing is a problem and that a broadscope model has worked well for APS. Launching small journals should not be done without careful thought. Miao and Schuhmann discussed the difficulty of knowing ahead of time if a specific area of physics will have long-term viability (if not, small journals would likely fail). Doyle felt that APS needs to be more agile and experimental and we need to react to the decrease in published papers. Wesselborg noted that the lack of an editorial resource "cushion" makes it difficult to adapt and take on new projects. He also noted that a shift to an Open Access model with low APCs would put us in a better position than our competitors. Kirby agreed.