

Canadian Association of Learned Journals / L'Association canadienne des revues savantes

Academic Recognition for Editors: A Policy Statement

The aim of the present policy is to raise awareness within academic institutions of the valuable work (and service to the community) performed by editors of learned journals, and to ensure that such work is given the recognition it deserves. Scholars are acutely aware of the importance of learned journals, because they depend on these publications to circulate the results of their own labours and to read about and evaluate the work done by researchers around the world. Administrators are aware of the prestige that a successful journal brings to the department or faculty that sponsors it, and to the university at large. Only editors themselves are aware of the degree to which their task requires intellectual leadership (in shaping the mandate of a journal), mentorship (in dealing with contributors and junior staff members), and dedication (in the commitment of countless hours to manuscript evaluation, correspondence, proofreading, and many other painstaking endeavours). The work of the universities and of their individual staff members could not be done and would certainly not be recognized without the contribution of learned journals. And yet, the persons most clearly responsible for guiding this enterprise—namely, the editors—are expected to perform their crucial and demanding role with little or (in extreme cases) no recognition of their efforts. There is a consensus among members of our association that this very serious oversight needs to be addressed in a collegial way and without further delay.

In practical terms, there appears to be little consistency in the ways in which

universities across Canada formally recognize the work of those who edit journals. Some editors receive course-release time, others receive a stipend, while yet others do their work without any recognition whatsoever. The situation must be addressed because the survival and quality of scholarly journals, one of academia's chief means of dissemination, depends on the willingness of outstanding scholars to take on editorships.

The extent and nature of editors' work will, of course, vary with the type of journal. However, many of them perform at all three of the levels (research, teaching, service) into which we have traditionally divided our professional work. While most university administrations will readily concede that an editor's work entails "service," they may not be quite so ready to acknowledge, formally, the research or the teaching components. However, editors are not only administrators, correspondents and diplomats at the local, national and international levels (and frequently in crisis mode when once again a budget cut is looming), but they also produce what amounts to the equivalent of at least one, usually more, edited volumes a year. For special issues in particular, the editor's scholarly contribution may be pioneering, and it frequently is. Moreover, many editors extend their teaching into their journal work by instructing, long-distance, their contributors in how to present their arguments in the most effective way, and by mentoring associate editors, if they are junior colleagues, as well as a steady parade of work-study and co-op students.

We have conducted a brief informal survey of our membership in order to determine how editors of learned journals see their own work. The question we asked was as follows: Of the work you perform specifically as an editor (not including work you may do as part of a regular academic or other appointment), what percentage, according to your best estimate, would fall into each of the following categories?

1. Research (evaluating manuscript material, selecting referees and evaluating their reports, consulting new publications, conferring with

authors about the contents of their work, and writing editorial commentary, etc.)

2. Teaching (mentoring graduate student assistants, providing instruction on various aspects of editorial processes, etc.)
3. Administration (convening, chairing or attending meetings; securing financial support; promoting sales and subscriptions; settling accounts payable; writing or revising in-house documents; hiring and supervising employees, etc.)
4. Technical (processing manuscript material, preparing layout, creating or evaluating design, proofreading, consulting with printers, maintaining Web sites, etc.)
5. Other (open)

The results of our survey show that a very large proportion of an editor's work falls within those categories (research, teaching, administration) most widely recognized as contributing to professional advancement: the total for these categories is 77%. It would follow that the broad range of an editor's work needs to be acknowledged appropriately in all decisions concerning his or her career.

Moreover, institutions must be urged to provide adequate release time to make the work manageable for an active scholar. Without such provisions, an editor will be unable to devote sufficient time to his or her own research agenda and will in effect pay a professional penalty for work done in the interests of a larger community. Institutions should also make available adequate monetary support for the duration of the editorship that would enable editors, for example, to attend relevant meetings and conferences and to engage in professional development separate from or in addition to regular professional development activities in their disciplines.

Some editors and a larger number of associate editors are relatively junior colleagues who are working toward tenure and promotion. However, it is

essential to involve them in editorial work not only because it is a useful addition to their dossier, but also because they are often the ones with the new ideas and energy required to take a journal into new intellectual directions. Their work must be officially recognized as outlined above and, in particular, they must be provided with appropriate release time to perform their often time-consuming editorial duties. Scholarly journals contribute vitally to the reputation of the institution at which they are published. CALJ therefore strongly urges university administrations to review the ways in which editors' work is recognized and, where appropriate, to improve their situation.

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