

CHAPTER 21

Submitting the Paper to the Journal

The final version of your paper is ready to be sent to the journal for which you have prepared it. You have in hand the numbers of manuscript copies and illustrations the journal asks for in its information-for-authors pages and additional copies for your file and your coauthors. Six steps remain.

- Preparing the submission letter to accompany the manuscript.
- Getting the signatures of all authors on forms required by the journal with submissions.
- Assembling all other items that also have to be sent with the manuscript.
- Packing the letter, manuscript, illustrations, and other documents.
- Checking again in the journal's information-for-authors pages on whether it expects submission of papers as a word-processing file on a "floppy" disk or via e-mail.
- Mailing the manuscript package.

THE SUBMISSION LETTER

The editor of the journal to which you are submitting the paper will need some information about you and your paper. You may wish to send additional information that could help the editor in processing the manuscript for review and coming to a decision. All of this information should be in the submission letter, also sometimes called "the covering letter". What should the letter say? What additional information might be included? The journal's information-for-authors pages may define what information it expects to find in a submission letter.

Identification of the Paper

The paper should be identified by its full title and the full names of all authors. The editor will probably assume that all of the listed authors have read

the final version and agreed to its content; some journals expect an explicit signed statement on such agreement. The institutional affiliations of the authors and the name of the institution in which the paper has its origin need not be given in the letter; this information should be carried on the title page (for some journals on the following page); see "Title Page" in Chapter 20.

Description of the Paper

If the title of the paper may not adequately summarize the content of the paper, perhaps because of complexity of its content, you may wish to describe the content more fully.

If the journal publishes various types and formats of papers (such as research reports, brief communications, reviews, editorials), the right category will probably be clear to the editor when he scans the manuscript for a first impression of the paper. You may wish, however, to indicate the category you believe to be appropriate. Presumably you selected the category from the journal's information-for-authors pages or a scan of the journal's content before you began to write the paper. The editor may disagree with your choice but if the paper is accepted you should be happy to accept his or her decision!

Selection of the Journal

That the content of the paper is relevant to the journal's scope and audience may be clear to the editor from the paper's title, abstract, or quickly scanned text. But if the paper might be appropriate for more than one kind of journal, you may wish to explain briefly why you selected the editor's journal. A paper on more efficient procedures for nurses in pediatricians' offices might be submitted to a journal in nursing or one in pediatrics. If the described study finds that the savings in time and costs may benefit the pediatrician more than the nurse, you may decide to prepare the paper for, and send it to, a pediatrics journal. Perhaps you should briefly make this point in your letter lest the editor of the pediatrics journal conclude as soon as he or she looks at the manuscript that it should have been sent to a nursing journal.

Repetitive Publication and Duplicate Submission

Professional journals are expensive to publish, and editors make the best use of their pages by publishing as much as possible only new information. Editors feel ethically obliged to do what they can to prevent clogging bibliographic indexes like MEDLINE with references to papers describing the same findings from a single study. For these reasons you should indicate in your letter that the content of your paper, in its entirety or in part, has not been published already and is not in any paper already, or about to be, sub-

mitted to another journal. A statement this specific is needed because to the editor *repetitive publication* refers not only to exact duplication of a paper (exactly the same title, abstract, text, references, tables, and illustrations) but also to repeated publication of essentially the same information whether or not it is presented in precisely the same way.

If any part of the submitted paper's content has been, or shortly will be, published but you believe that its publication again should not thereby be precluded, you should tell the editor why you believe publication of your submitted paper in his or her journal is justified and specify the extent of the duplication. The editor may be aided by your including with the manuscript (see below) a copy of any possibly related paper.

A paper should be sent to only one journal and not to another until it has been rejected by the first. Editors resent having to spend time and effort in processing papers also submitted to other journals that are subsequently withdrawn because of an acceptance elsewhere. What you might gain through saving time in getting an acceptance more quickly, you may lose in reputation. Your letter should include a statement that the paper is being submitted only to that journal and has not been, or will not shortly be, submitted to another journal.

Conflicts of Interest

Some journals may expect a statement in the submission letter identifying any real or potential conflict of interest among the authors between objective reporting of properly designed research and financial or contractual interests with organizations that might bias what data are reported and how they are interpreted. This kind of information may be expected in a separate form. The journal's information-for-authors pages should be checked again for such requirements.

Conditions on Publication

State in the submission letter any conditions you feel you must place on publication of the paper by the journal if it is accepted. You may wish, for example, to read a version of the paper at a professional society meeting in May and to do so must respect the policy of the society that only papers not already published may be read at its meeting. Hence, you will have to ask of the editor that if the paper is accepted it not be published earlier than June. Or you may wish to have the paper also published in a proceedings of a scientific meeting to be issued at a date far enough in the future so that it will appear after its publication in the journal; you want to be sure that the journal will grant you permission for the republication in the proceedings. This situation should be described to the editor so that he or she can decide whether the time needed for review of the manuscript, the journal's back-

log (if any), and the press schedule are such that your request could be met. Another example is that of color illustrations; you may wish to have the editor agree to publish the paper, if accepted, only with the color, rather than black-and-white, illustrations.

Whatever condition you may wish to place on publication, be sure that you do need it. The rejection rate is necessarily high in a major journal popular with authors; its editor may not wish to have to deal with conditions that may limit the scope of editorial decisions and the flexibility of schedules. The editor may prefer to reject the paper immediately to avoid possibly being burdened later with the condition asked for.

Copyright

Most professional journals expect to have the copyright on an article to be transferred to the journal by the author when the paper is submitted or when it is accepted. An author will not be free to transfer copyright in two circumstances: if he or she has written the paper as a Federal employee, or if the copyright became the property of a private organization at the time of the paper's creation because of the author's acceptance of that arrangement as an employee of the organization. If the author cannot transfer copyright to the journal for one of these two reasons or any other reason, that constraint should be stated in the submission letter. Some journals will not accept a paper for which copyright cannot be transferred (except papers from Federal employees).

Content for Optional Publication

What if your paper is very long, in part because of an unusually large number of large tables, but you feel that all of its content should be available to at least some readers? You could point out in your letter that you would be willing to have those portions of the paper not critically needed for most readers filed in an archival repository from which interested readers would be able to get copies of the part deleted from the version of the paper published. A journal may be willing to let authors state that they will supply readers with copies of large tables (or other material) that could not be included in the published version of the paper. Such materials might also be posted at an institutional Web site.

Alternatives in Format

A Methods section might be very long because, for example, it includes a detailed description of a statistical method rarely used in medical research. The author might suggest to the editor that the description could be placed at the end of the paper in an appendix, where it would not distract readers

interested in the paper but unable to understand the principles and application of the statistical method.

Suggestions on Reviewers

Most editors maintain files with the names of potential manuscript reviewers who are expert in the fields covered by their journals, but these files may not be adequate for some highly specialized topics. If you believe that the topic of your paper is one not frequently covered by the journal, you may wish to suggest experts on the topic who could pass critical judgment on your paper. If you do so, you might assure the editor that the suggested reviewers have not participated in any way in preparing the paper, have not read the paper before its submission, and are not friends who might be uncritically biased toward the paper.

If your research is in a highly competitive field, you may not wish to have your paper reviewed by rivals; you may feel that they might be tempted to hinder or try to block its publication. You can properly ask the editor not to use as reviewers the persons you specify. You should not, however, give the editor such a long list of reviewers to be avoided that he or she will suspect you of eliminating all persons expert enough in the field to find any weaknesses in the paper.

The Responsible Author

The letter must make clear who will be responsible for receiving correspondence and phone calls from the editor or other members of the journal's staff and who will be responsible for revising the paper. Usually, but not always, the two will be the same person, probably you. The letter should include the name(s), postal address(es), and phone number(s). Other useful addresses may include those for an electronic-mail system ("e-mail") or a facsimile ("fax") or telex terminal. If the previously agreed-upon responsible author may be away in the near future for a long vacation, a business trip abroad, or a sabbatical leave, an alternative responsible author should be designated, also with address and telephone information.

If your paper is being submitted by an editor in your institution (an "author's editor"), the letter should indicate whether the journal editor is free to correspond with, or telephone, the responsible author for revisions and meeting other requests or should direct all inquiries and requests to the author's editor.

Payment for Manuscript Handling

Some journals charge a fee to cover the costs of processing and reviewing manuscripts; those that do will indicate so in their information-for-authors

pages. If the journal to which you are sending the paper expects to receive payment with the manuscript, indicate in the letter that payment is enclosed and identify the document of payment (check, bank draft, or money order).

Cost of Color Illustrations

Some journals will take on the cost of publishing color illustrations, which is far higher than for black-and-white illustrations, but many journals expect the author to meet that cost. Indicate in the letter whether you will be willing to pay for this cost if your paper includes color illustrations.

What Not to Include in the Letter

Probably all editors feel that they, their editorial associates, their editorial boards, and their manuscript reviewers are collectively competent enough to judge the importance and validity of papers in the fields their journals cover. You may have doubts about a particular journal, but presumably that is not the journal to which you are sending your paper. Do not risk slurring the editor's competence by including in the letter what the advertising industry calls a "hard sell"; do not claim that the paper reports the greatest breakthrough in medical science since Pasteur demolished the theory of spontaneous generation of life or reports the greatest advance in therapeutics since Fleming stumbled onto penicillin. If your paper is so important, it will be recognized as such. If it is not so recognized, your effusions will probably not change anyone's judgment; the manuscript reviewers will probably not see your letter anyway.

REQUIRED SUBMISSION FORMS

As already indicated in this chapter, some journals expect to receive some of the information relevant to the submitted paper on specific forms. Such forms may include a transfer-of-copyright form, an affirmation-of-authorship form, a form for reporting real or potential conflicts-of-interest. Requirements for inclusion of such forms in the submission package will be stated in a journal's information-for-authors pages and the forms may even be published in some issues of the journal adjacent to the information pages. You may have noted such requirements weeks or months ago when you consulted the journal's information pages before beginning to write the paper (as suggested in Chapters 2 and 4), but if you did not, be sure to check for them now.

THE NEXT STEP

After you have prepared your submission letter (see Figure 21.1 for an example), you should be ready to prepare the manuscript and accompanying materials for mailing.

Rosena Happenstance, DM
Editor, Journal of Therapeutic Science
999 Rocky Lane
Butterbush DN 10001-4323

Dear Dr Happenstance:

31 December 1987

Enclosed are three copies of "Aspirin for Treatment of Headaches: A Double-blind Comparison with a Placebo", by TX Stone, RM Rock, and J Doe. The paper is submitted to be considered for publication as a research report in your journal. Neither the entire paper nor any part of its content has been published or has been accepted by another journal. The paper is not being submitted in its entirety or in part to any other journal.

We believe the paper may be of particular interest to your readers because the study reports a new and more precise method of estimating subjective relief of pain.

Correspondence and phone calls about the paper should be directed to me at the following address and phone number:

Jan Doe, BSN, PhD
Institute for Analgesic Research
4321 Main Road
Asberdelphia, UZ 12345-999
(234) 567-8912

Thank you for your attention to our paper.
Sincerely yours,

Jan Doe, BSN, PhD

FIGURE 21.1. A typical, but fictional, submission letter.

The Manuscript Package

Contents

It is clear to you already that more than the manuscript must be mailed to the editor. Here is a checklist that includes items which must be sent and items needed only in some circumstances. This checklist may not be complete for some journals. Check the journal's information-for-authors pages for what it expects to receive in the submission package; it may expect, for example, to receive, as indicated above, a "floppy" disk version of the paper in the form of a word-processing file.

- Submission letter.
- Manuscript copies: the number requested by the journal; illustrations in separate envelopes for each set.

- Transfer-of-copyright form (unless the submission letter indicates transfer of copyright).
- Copies of related manuscripts or papers (see above, "Repetitive Publication and Duplicate Submission")
- Reply postal card or letter with self-addressed and stamped envelope for acknowledgment of receipt of the manuscript (not wanted by some journals)
- Copies of permissions to publish pictures of patients, to cite unpublished communications, to acknowledge help with the paper
- Stiffening cardboard

The items to be sent should be mailed in a sturdy envelope large enough to accommodate them without difficulty but small enough to protect its contents against shifting about. Photographs can be protected against creasing by including cardboard inserts fitting snugly into the envelope.

Addressing the Envelope

Be sure that you have the correct address to which the manuscript package should be mailed; check the journal's information-for-authors pages if you are not sure. Occasionally authors erroneously mail manuscripts to the journal's advertising office or its publisher's office, which may not be at the same location as the editorial office.

Mailing

Unless you must meet a very close deadline, the manuscript package can usually be sent to the editorial office within the country by first-class mail; when you consider the time likely to be required for peer reviewing of the paper (see Chapter 22) the small gain in time from sending it by one of the express-mail services is rarely worth their greater cost. If you are mailing it to another country or to another continent, use air mail.

Before you mail the package be sure that you, and perhaps your coauthors, have retained copies of all that you are about to mail. Mail service is not flawless anywhere; some manuscripts do get lost.

CONCLUSION

Submitting a paper to a journal calls for preparing a submission letter that will give the editor the information he or she will need about you and the paper, assembling any items that will have to be sent along with the manuscript, packing the manuscript and other items in a suitable envelope, and mailing the package.

CHAPTER 22

Peer Reviewing and the Editor's Decision

You wrote and revised your paper with great care. The manuscript of the final version was typed and assembled with close attention to the journal's requirements. You mailed the manuscript to the editor and received notice of its arrival at the journal's office. What happens next?

WHAT DETERMINES EDITORIAL DECISIONS?

Journals differ greatly in how their editors decide what to accept and what to reject. The chief editors of some journals, notably those in the basic medical services, divide the reading of submitted papers and responsibility for decisions on them, with or without peer reviews, among associate editors and members of a large editorial board. Editors of journals in clinical medicine and closely related fields may be aided in assessing papers by one or more associate editors but are highly likely to also ask peer reviewers (manuscript reviewers) to read papers critically, suggest possible decisions, and recommend revisions the editor may request before acceptance of papers.

Factors Bearing on Decisions

Exactly what procedure is followed by an editor in coming to decisions is less important for authors than the factors the editor may have to take into account in each decision. Most journals receive far more papers than they can carry in the pages allotted by the publisher. For this reason, rejection rates necessarily run at some arbitrary level, which for the more prominent clinical journals is between, roughly, 50% and 90%. Thus editors must decide on criteria to sort out which papers will be accepted and which will not.

At least five criteria are likely to be applied at some time by most editors.

- Relevance of the paper to the journal's scope and audience.
- Importance of the paper's message to most of the journal's audience.
- Newness of the paper's message.
- Scientific validity of the evidence supporting the paper's conclusions.
- Usefulness of the paper to the journal in its maintaining a desirable range of topics.

Even if a paper is acceptable when judged by these five criteria, the editor may have to apply two more.

- Effect of acceptance on the journal's backlog of already accepted papers.
- Quality and pertinence of the presentation in the manuscript and the extent of revision that would be needed for an acceptance.

Editors do not wish to have their journals known as slow to get papers into print, so they have to hold down the backlog of papers accepted but not yet published. The backlog does have to be large enough to ensure an adequate supply of papers for publication in the face of fluctuations from week to week in the numbers of papers submitted. But the backlog also must be kept small enough not to lead to a delay in publishing accepted papers. A paper rejected when the backlog is large might have been accepted if the backlog had been small. The quality of presentation may be a decisive factor. Two papers with equal merit in content may compete with each other for acceptance; if one has an equal potential importance but has been poorly written and its manuscript carelessly prepared, it is likely to be the one rejected.

Even though an editor may apply most of these criteria in coming to a decision on your paper, you may never know exactly how your paper was judged. Editors are unlikely to assign exact quantitative judgments to all papers for each criterion. If they did, they would probably not have the time to dictate decision letters that would explain in detail all the criteria applied to each paper and how it ranked for each criterion. The decision letter you receive will almost certainly not explain why your paper was accepted if that is the good news. If the letter brings the bad news of rejection, it is likely to carry at least one reason for rejection, but it is not likely to describe all the factors that were assessed by the editor for the decision. Some of them may be apparent in comments by peer reviewers prepared for the author.

PEER REVIEWING

Virtually no editors of either clinical or basic-science journals are expert enough in enough topics within their fields to be able, by themselves, to come to critical judgments on what to publish and what not to publish. They may have associate editors with expertise in topics beyond what they know well but even then they must rely heavily on getting critical judgments from

external reviewers ("peer reviewers"; in some fields called "referees") or most of the papers they even consider possibly publishing.

Policies and Procedures

Policies of journals on what papers to send out for external critical reading differ widely. Some of the major clinical journals may send out only 40 or 50% of submitted papers and reject the other 50 or 60% without peer reviewing. These rejections will be based on one or more of the criteria laid out above.

- The paper's topic is outside the journal's scope.
- The paper's message is "stale"; the paper is not sufficiently "new".
- The paper has obvious and irremediable flaws in scientific validity.

And so on. Such a policy is quite understandable. Peer reviewing is expensive in clerical and mailing costs. Good peer reviewers must not be overburdened with requests for reviews lest they become unavailable. Many authors do feel that all papers submitted to a journal should have external readings. Certainly they could benefit from criticisms returned by reviewers: even if the journal does not wish to publish the paper. Indeed, some journals do send all papers out for critical readings, perhaps through the editorial-board members or a large group of external associate editors. How can you find out the policy of a journal on peer reviewing?

Many journals now publish detailed statements on their policies and procedures on peer reviewing, generally in their information-for-authors pages. Procedures in peer reviewing are changing and such statements may no longer cover all possible points. In general, reviewers are still kept anonymous. Some journals attempt to "blind" their reviewers by trying to conceal the authorship of papers. With the development of rapid electronic communication and Web sites, some journals may move to a much more open kind of peer reviewing. If you cannot find a published statement by a journal on its policy and procedure, some of your colleagues who have dealt with that journal may be able to give you a sense of how it proceeds.

What Do Editors Ask of Peer Reviewers?

Some authors misunderstand the function of peer reviewers and think that they are asked by editors, in effect, to "vote" on whether a paper should be accepted, to give the editor the decision. A few journals may work this way but most do not. Most editors regard peer reviewers simply as advisors, persons who give their own expert opinions on a paper. What questions may be posed to elicit those opinions?

- What would be the potential importance of a paper if it is published? Would it represent truly new information? Would it represent only confirmation of recently published new information? Would it strengthen the evidence for an apparently important newly developed concept or diagnostic procedure or treatment? What kind of priority should the paper be given if the editor must choose among many papers with equal merit? What would be its audience?
- What is the strength of evidence for the paper's conclusions? Was the research design adequate? Was the research properly executed? Were the data properly analyzed? Are there probably remediable defects that could be mended in a revised version?
- Is the paper clear enough? Properly structured and sequenced?
- What criticisms and recommendations would you wish to pass on to the authors for revision of the paper?
- Do you suggest acceptance? Possible acceptance after revision? Rejection? Note, as commented above, that editors do not take such recommendations as "votes" on what the editor should do but, rather, as summary statements on the worth of the paper, as the reviewer sees it, for the journal.

Editors generally seek such opinions from reviewers by supplying them with forms that indicate the kinds of judgments sought and provide space for the reviewers to write out in detail the basis for their judgments. In general, reviewers are asked to not state their judgments on the publishability (for the particular journal) of a paper in comments they prepare for authors.

How Many Reviewers Are Asked to Review a Paper?

How many reviewers are asked to read a paper can depend on the journal's general policy on reviewing and on the paper itself. In general, most journals that ask for peer reviews seek to get reviews from at least two reviewers. The two may be selected so as to try to ensure a balance of judgments, one reviewer expected to probably have some bias toward the paper's content and the other likely to have some anti-bias. If the paper has complex content and a wider range of expertise is needed, more than two reviewers will be sought. If two reviewers were sought and one returned an unsatisfactory, cursory review, a third may be sought.

What Do Editors Do with Peer Reviews?

As pointed out above, editors treat reviewers' critiques and judgments as advisory. An externally reviewed paper will probably be discussed at one of the periodic meetings of the journal's editorial board or the journal's group of editors. If both of the opinions of the peer reviewers are clearly adverse, the editor may come to his or her decision alone. Even if the paper is brought

to a board or editorial group meeting, a decision may be postponed until further critical judgments on the paper are available, for example, a close reading by an expert in epidemiologic methods or a statistician.

Even if a journal decides to reject a paper after peer reviewing, it will probably send the author copies of the reviewers' comments prepared specifically for the author or authors. Occasionally reviewers, despite instructions to keep their comments impersonal, will indulge in *ad hominem* comments or will allow opinions on publishability of the paper to get into the comments. Careful editors remove such content. Even if the journal's policy calls for reviewer anonymity, some reviewers ask that they be identified and the journal may allow that.

TIME NEEDED FOR A DECISION

How soon can you expect to receive a decision? If the editor reads your paper, decides not to send it to peer reviewers, and rejects it, you may receive that decision promptly. But even if the editor decides on rejection as soon as he reads the paper, the typing and mailing of a decision letter take time. So no less than two or three weeks are likely to pass before you hear from the editor.

If the paper is sent to external reviewers for reading, more time will pass before a decision. Reviewers are asked to review papers promptly, often within a specified period such as ten days or two weeks, but even those who agree to a time limit may exceed it because of illness or unanticipated demands on their time. The many differences in editorial-office procedures and consultant response make it hard to predict the time needed for a decision on a peer-reviewed paper. A fair range of time is four to eight weeks. If you have not received a decision within this period, the editor may have had difficulties in getting adequate consultant critiques or the office staff may have been burdened with an unusually heavy load of work. Sending an inquiry by letter to the editor on the status of your paper after eight weeks have passed and you have not received a decision is a reasonable step to take.

DECISIONS AND RESPONSES

Acceptances: Immediate and Provisional

Few authors, particularly those whose papers have not been invited, receive immediate and unconditional acceptances. Even authors fortunate enough to have their papers accepted immediately for important and valid content are likely to be asked to revise the paper to improve its presentation: shortening text, restructuring tables, eliminating informal abbreviations, improving illustrations, or other changes. If you do receive an immediate acceptance with such requests for revision, be pleased with your good fortune and carry out the requests. The revisions are, from the editor's point of view, needed for

good reasons, such as space available, format limits on number of tables, and other technical problems. If the requests seem unclear, unreasonable, impossible to carry out, or likely to cripple the paper's capacity to carry its message, do not simply refuse to carry out the revisions and return the paper unrevised. Reply by letter to the editor about the difficulties you see in revising the paper along the lines requested and why. The editor may insist on the revisions or, if your objections seem justified, may compromise on the first requests.

Acceptances are often provisional, with final acceptance depending on how well the author can revise the paper to meet criticisms of its content, the requests for revision of its presentation, or both. As with immediate acceptances calling only for technical revisions of the manuscript, do your best to revise the paper without delay along the lines recommended by the reviewers and requested by the editor. If recommendations from the reviewers are contradictory, you may have to ask the editor for guidance on how to proceed if his letter has not mediated between the conflicting comments. Not all recommendations from reviewers may have to be accepted, but you will have to justify to the editor (see below) why you have not made those changes. Before you conclude that revision is not needed because the consultant apparently did not read your paper closely, be sure that the paper does not suffer from faulty presentation, such as unclear writing, conflicting data, or some other defect. If you disagree with most, if not all, of the reviewers' recommendations and the editor's requests, you can appeal to the editor for exemptions. Do not simply ignore the reviewers' comments and the editor's decision letter and return the paper unchanged. You may prefer withdrawing the paper from further consideration by the journal, but if you take this step, inform the editor so that the journal's records of your paper can be kept up-to-date.

Returning a Revised Paper

Review of your revised paper will be easier for the editor, the journal staff, and reviewers who read the new version if you send with it a letter not only identifying it as a new version but also specifying exactly what changes were made, their locations, and their relation to the reviewers' recommendations and the editor's requests. Changes asked for and not made should be pointed out, and you should justify having not made them. If each consultant was not identified in some way so that you can link your changes to specific recommendations, you may wish to make copies of the reviewers' sheets and mark them for ready reference in your letter, such as "recommendations A1, A3 and recommendations B2, B6, and B7" (from Consultant A and Consultant B).

Rejections

What if the paper is rejected? Do not get angry and take a rash step. The rejection may be fully justified from the editor's point of view. Keep in mind

how authors are competing for limited space in journals, especially the most widely read journals. Consider carefully the comments from the reviewers, if the paper was sent out to reviewers. They may point out sound reasons that figured in the editor's decision. If the reviewers seem to have misread the paper, the fault may lie in unclear writing, misplaced emphasis, or some other defect in the paper's structure or style. If the editor's letter simply tells you that the paper could not be given a high enough priority, or that space cannot be made for the paper (another way of stating priorities), you are likely getting the truth. This is a shorthand way to tell you that the paper's information is not new enough or important enough for the journal at this time. That kind of rejection is not necessarily a slur on the soundness of the paper's content or on how well it presents its message.

Should you appeal the decision? If you think you can meet major objections to the paper by revising it, the editor may be willing to reconsider a new version but do not send in a new version without getting the editor's consent. If you seek that consent, do it by correspondence. The editor may have reasons not given in the rejection letter as to why the paper was rejected, and you may be able to save yourself time by getting those reasons.

Should you send the paper to another journal? This response is usually the better step, unless you decide not to go on with seeking to get it published. The paper may be readily accepted by a journal of lesser reputation or a more specialized journal. Before you send the paper to a new journal, however, do what you can to improve the odds that it will be accepted. Consider carefully the comments from reviewers and from the editor. These may enable you to improve the paper greatly. Do not overlook the possibility that the reviewers who will read the paper for the second journal may include one or more of the reviewers who read it for the first journal; if so, a failure to revise the paper in response to fair criticism could bias a reviewer against the paper in this second submission. Be sure that the manuscript you send is a clean manuscript, bearing no marks from its submission to the first journal, no restapling holes, no other indications to the second journal's editor that he is not the first editor to see it! Be sure, too, that the new manuscript meets all the technical requirements of the second journal. In brief, be sure that the manuscript looks as if it had been prepared specifically for the second journal.

CONCLUSION

Journals differ in the procedures used for review of submitted papers and decisions on which to accept. Most use some variation of the peer review system in which experts are asked to give the editor judgments on papers' validity and importance. The editor is likely to apply additional criteria in coming to decisions. If your paper is ac-

continued

Conclusion continued

cepted, some revision is still likely to be needed to meet reviewer and editorial requests. If your paper is rejected, consider carefully, not angrily, whether the rejection was justified and whether the paper should be carefully revised again, even if you decide to submit it to another journal, rather than give up efforts to get it published.

CHAPTER 23

Correcting Edited Manuscript or Proof

The editor has accepted your paper. The acceptance letter may also tell you when you can expect to receive proof of the paper to read and correct and in what issue the paper will be published.

When journals were printed from lead type, authors could expect to receive eventually a proof of their papers for correction. A proof was a version of your paper set in type and printed out on paper. The proof would show you what changes were made in the paper by one of the journal's editors when the manuscript was prepared for the printer. Proof was usually sent to the author in the form of galley proof, long single-columns of the text of the paper as it was set in type. Authors got from the proof some impression of how the paper was going to look in print, but the main reason for sending authors proof was to enable them to catch errors in typesetting the paper and to correct them. The proof might carry questions from the manuscript editor about some details in the paper on which he or she needed some explanation. After galley proof was corrected by you and by the manuscript editor, the columns of type were assembled into pages. Proof of the pages would be checked by the journal for adequacy of corrections, but, generally, authors would not be sent page proofs for review.

With the development of computer-based equipment and procedures for publishing, journals have changed radically in what they provide authors between acceptance of a paper and its appearance in the published journal.

PRESENT-DAY PREPUBLICATION PROCEDURES

Journals now differ widely in what they send to authors as the main step in actually publishing a paper.