



## Journey Toward Editorial Leadership

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Every day across the world, journal editors make publishing decisions that shape the disciplines they represent. As leaders, editors control the content of their journals and disseminate knowledge that guides professional practice and influences health.<sup>1</sup> Being a journal editor requires specialized knowledge, skills, and abilities. That few formal programs exist to mentor future journal editors may explain why the role of editor is a position few nurses achieve.<sup>1</sup>

This editorial discusses my personal journey toward editorial leadership and lessons learned. I hope to provide guidance to others aspiring to become a journal editor. After 5 years as author of a recurring column in the *Journal of Nursing Administration (JONA)*, this farewell contribution is my last before assuming the role of editor-in-chief (EIC) with the *Journal for Healthcare Quality (JHQ)*. With gratitude, I acknowledge the fol-

lowing colleagues for their generous support in my journey toward becoming a journal EIC: Drs Janet Fulton, Patricia Yoder Wise, Suzanne Smith (deceased), Karen Hill, and Kathleen Sanford.

### Background

My journey toward journal editorship has been intentional rather than accidental. It is a journey that began 12 years ago when, as a PhD student at Indiana University (IU) my then professor, Dr Janet Fulton, encouraged and guided me in my earliest publication venture as a doctoral student. My experiences at IU provided exposure to faculty members who were journal editors and whose contributions inspired me. It was Dr Fulton who gave me my 1st opportunity to write an entrepreneurship column in the journal *Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS)*. Through the CNS column, I learned to craft timely content that would meet a standardized format within a strict word count and align my efforts with the broader journal's mission. I wrote the CNS column from 2006 to 2010, and it was Dr Fulton who introduced me to an important networking and educational venue, The International Academy of Nurse Editors (INANE). Although formal mentorship for

future editors was not available through INANE until 2014, INANE<sup>2</sup> now has that opportunity in place through the Suzanne Smith Development Fund, a memorial program started as a tribute to *JONA's* beloved editor for 30 years who died September 2013.

At the INANE annual meeting held in Chicago in 2009, Dr Fulton introduced me to Dr Patricia Yoder Wise, who had just been named EIC for her 2nd journal, *Nursing Forum*. Dr Yoder Wise gave me the opportunity to serve as Deputy Editor of *Nursing Forum* (2009-2015) and in this capacity helped train me to become a future EIC. Knowing of my editorial leadership dreams and aspirations, Dr Yoder Wise completed a skill set assessment and facilitated opportunities that would strengthen my knowledge gaps, thus positioning me for the future. Together, Dr Yoder Wise and I worked to advance *Nursing Forum* and collaborated on several co-guest editor assignments for *Nursing Administration Quarterly (NAQ)*. As a member of the NAQ editorial board (2009 to present), Dr Kathleen Sanford provided the NAQ co-guest editor opportunities that would refine my ability to put together a whole journal publication. As co-guest editor with NAQ, I learned the editor side of Editorial

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Manager, our electronic submission system, as well as enhanced my ability to manage authors, reviewers, copy editors, and the production cycle to bring a full issue to press.

Simultaneous with my *Nursing Forum* and *NAQ* roles, I served at the invitation of the late Dr Suzanne Smith as editor for the Strategic Leadership for Organizational Change column in *JONA* from 2011 to 2015. It was through *JONA* that I gained additional editorial experience and got to know and work with Dr Karen Hill who will be a wonderful resource as I transition into the EIC role with the *JHQ*. Because *JONA* and *JHQ* both share the same publisher, I now join a broader family of nurse editor colleagues.

As someone who loves writing, editing, and mentoring others to cultivate their own scholarship, I have further shaped my editorial leadership experiences to enhance multiple aspects of the EIC role. Since 2004, I have published 100 journal articles and continued to serve as a consulting peer reviewer for multiple journals, including, among others, *JONA*, *Nursing Forum*, and *NAQ*. In my faculty role as a university professor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, I have created and taught doctoral students in a course titled Writing for Publication. As a teacher, I have the privilege of tapping others on the shoulder and encouraging them to pursue their own writing and editorial journeys much in the same way Dr Fulton did with me many years ago.

### **Lessons Learned**

Based on my experiences as journal column editor, deputy editor, editorial board member, peer re-

viewer, and author, I have learned many lessons that can guide others in their own editorial leadership journey. I have shaped those lessons into a list of top 10 tips.

### **Focus Your Efforts**

It is important to decide on the type of editor you wish to become—journal, book, magazine, newspaper, or other. If serving as editor of a scholarly journal is your objective, then it makes sense to learn more about those journals, what they publish, and how they are formatted.

### **Learn Appropriate Styles and Formats**

As editor of a scholarly journal, it will be important to master the most common industry formatting styles: American Psychological Association or the American Medical Association. Knowing these styles inside and out will enhance both your writing and editing. Because many journals have both print and digital formats, learning to be comfortable in both mediums adds to your editorial versatility.

### **Gain Higher Education and Content Expertise**

When deciding on an EIC, journals prefer individuals who demonstrate a combination of advanced educational preparation and content expertise related to the journal's mission and vision. To enhance your future chances of editing the journal you target, it would be advantageous to gain professional experience in that journal's specific focus area.

### **Write a Lot**

Journal editors ideally should 1st be good writers. Being a prolific author hones your writing skills,

familiarizes you with various journals and styles, and improves your writing as a result of exposure to the editorial review process. The more you write, the more you will become known in your specialty field, thus opening doors to multiple other opportunities to cultivate your EIC journey.

### **Read a Lot**

Being well-read is essential for becoming both a good writer and editor. Knowing what has and has not been published in the literature helps authors to shape their publications and editors to decide what publications to pursue. From reading extensively, an aspiring editor gains an understanding of developments and trends in the field.

### **Edit a Lot**

Editing the work of others enhances personal proficiency in writing for clarity and consistency. Editing also improves your ability to provide others with effective, actionable constructive feedback.

### **Learn Many Editorial Roles**

In pursuing an editorial journey, it is important to build your knowledge base in the many skill sets you will either use or supervise as an EIC. Gaining experience as a peer reviewer, author, column editor, and editorial board member stretches you to grow and adds depth to your talents, thus positioning you well for future EIC opportunities.

### **Cultivate Relationships**

Being an EIC requires not only technical but also interpersonal skills. Building long-lasting relationships with mentors, authors, editors, and publishers will broaden your circle of friends and strengthen your



network of industry colleagues. It is through these relationships that you will in turn be able to influence and shape another aspiring individual's EIC journey.

### Tap Into an Editorial Network

For individuals aspiring to be journal editors in nursing, learning about INANE is an important 1st step. This organization holds an annual meeting designed for nurse editors to learn and network. This professional community provides year-round avenues for accessing educational resources and tapping into other colleagues within the editor network. Through INANE is the opportunity to apply for a mentored experience as a future EIC.

### Never Stop Learning

Achieving an EIC role is not the end of an editorial journey. Research suggests that becoming reasonably comfortable in the editor role takes 2 years on average, with a range of 3 months to 5 years.<sup>1</sup> In keeping with the Institute of Medicine's recommendations for the *Future of Nursing*,<sup>3</sup> journal editors, like all other nursing leaders, must be lifelong learners.

### Conclusion

This article presents my personal journey toward editorial leadership and offers tips for aspiring journal editors. The advice is consistent with Kearney and Freda's<sup>4</sup> call to share

editorial leadership experiences with others. I hope I can inspire others to seek the necessary opportunities to pursue an EIC journey.

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