


**EDITOR'S NOTE:  
ADVICE TO A NEW JOURNAL EDITOR**

**ABSTRACT**

*On April 14, 2017, the scholarly discipline-based education research community lost all-too-soon one of its innovative thought leaders, Ronald C. Clute (1944-2017). After a successful career in traditional University academia, Dr. Clute (Ph.D. Notre Dame) became one of the first highly successful alternative academics, alt-ac, by starting and nurturing the Clute Institute as a family-run, academic publishing company that today serves as a national model for helping scholars distribute their work internationally. Always generous with advice, some of the most important ideas he shared with new editors were to: (i) Invest in authors with great ideas, even when the writing is lousy; (ii) If a submission isn't a great idea, don't bother already too-busy reviewers with it; (iii) Plan on revising authors always being slower at responding than reviewers; (iv) Allocate more time to growing and nurturing your reviewer pool than you think; (v) Increase submissions by being visible at meetings and talking to presenters and (iv) run a formative review process that makes papers better rather than a summative rejection service. These ideas are offered in respect for his longstanding work.*

 On April 14, 2017, the scholarly discipline-based education research community lost all-too-soon one of its innovative thought leaders, Ronald C. Clute (1944-2017). After a successful career in traditional University academia, Dr. Clute (Ph.D. Notre Dame) became one of the first highly successful alternative academics, alt-ac, by starting and nurturing an academic publishing company that today serves as a national model for helping scholars distribute their work internationally.

Dr. Clute was an enthusiastic supporter and tireless mentor to the entire Editorial Advisory Board for initiating and growing the Journal of Astronomy & Earth Sciences Education (JAESE.org), which is published and archived by the Clute Institute. In his efforts helping to launch JAESE on a successful trajectory, he generously offered hard-earned insight that can serve as important messages for anyone starting to edit a journal. In respect for his long standing words of advice, we freely offer some of his ideas here, in far less eloquent wording than he himself would have written, if he was able to still be with us.

*“Invest in authors with great ideas, even when the writing is lousy.”* Too often, insightful and fruitful ideas are lost to the broader community because thought leaders can be terrible writers—if they bother to write things down at all! This means, when someone has a great idea, find a way to get their work publishable, even if that means finding them a co-author.

*“Don't spend too much time rewriting and reformatting poorly submitted work.”* Rarely ever will a manuscript be submitted that has perfect grammar, active voice, appropriate blinding, no misspellings, and correctly done citations and references. Do not let these mechanical errors be your judge of a work's quality or importance; at the same time, do not spend your own time fixing those issues. Be sure authors themselves do the citation formatting by telling them how to fix it rather than fix it yourself.

*“If a submission isn't a great idea, don't bother already too-busy reviewers with it.”* The best reviewers are consistently people who are already busy. The old un-attributable adage of “if you want something done, find a really busy person to do it” rings consistently true. If you want to keep your recruited community of reviewers working for you, recognize that they are busy and only send them things worth taking time to enhance and most appropriate for your readers.

*“Plan on revising authors always being slower at responding than reviewers.”* One would think that the review process is usually hung up when reviewers are slow. Surprisingly more often, it is the authors who receive an “accept with revisions” that slow down the submission-to-print time schedule, so plan accordingly.

*“Allocate more time to growing and nurturing your reviewer pool than you think.”* A journal’s Board of Peer Reviewers is its most important asset. For one, these reviewers are the gatekeepers to be sure that the journal only publishes high quality work, which then goes on to serve as a model (and perhaps a filter) for future submissions. For another, the Board of Reviewers are often a journal’s best advertiser, suggesting it to colleagues as an important place to submit one’s best scholarly work. Take the time to nurture and recruit the best people for this heartbeat role in a journal’s life.

*“Increase submissions by being visible at meetings and talking to presenters.”* It is a mistake to think everyone knows about your journal. As Editor, your job is to tirelessly be on the lookout for potential authors. One of the best strategies is to be visible at professional conferences and aggressively invite scholars with promising work to share their research in your journal. Always have a stack of business cards to distribute, and always be prepared to personally follow-up with busy professors multiple times as great articles are sometimes years in the making. Most importantly, people are more apt to submit their work to criticism by an editor they like and respect rather than someone they do not know and fear.

*“Run a formative review process that makes papers better rather than a summative rejection service.”* Far, far too many journals simply take in articles, run them through the several months long turn-the-crank review process, only to reject articles with precious little dignity nor constructive feedback. Instead, remember that authors probably worked late into the night or over the weekend, perhaps even missing their children’s soccer games, or were mentally absent during a family meal, in order to get a manuscript to your journal. In other words, a manuscript often represents sacrifice, and the work and the author should be treated with the upmost respect. A great experience for the individual is more important than a journal’s rejection rate.

This last important idea—handle review as a constructive and formative improvement process—is perhaps the most important. Ron Clute was endlessly passionate about helping people, and we at JAESE encourage anyone who is considering becoming a first-time journal editor to remember that publishing is ultimately a human endeavor worthy of dignity, respect, and one’s uninterrupted attention.

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*Editor-in-Chief*