

Geological Society of America Ethical Guidelines for Publication

Society publications are the vehicle in which the results of scientific inquiry, guided by the scientific method, are shared with other geoscience researchers and made available to a wider public audience. Results presented in Society publications advance research, inform governmental policy decisions, educate students, and assist the private sector in a wide range of endeavors. Thus it is important for the Society to maintain a level of quality and integrity in its publication process. This responsibility rests with all involved in the publication process – authors, reviewers, editors, GSA officials, and GSA staff. The following document outlines a set of ethical guidelines for all those involved in GSA publications (journals, books, maps, abstracts, electronic media). Adherence to these guidelines should promote fair treatment of manuscripts through the peer review process.

This document draws heavily on ethical guidelines prepared by other scientific societies, most notably the American Chemical Society. The list of sources below also includes more general documents on ethics in science consulted in preparation of these guidelines.

National Academy of Sciences: On Being A Scientist: Responsible Conduct In Research (<http://stills.nap.edu/html/obas/>)

American Chemical Society
(<http://pubs.acs.org/instruct/ethic.html>)

American Physical Society
(<http://www.aps.org/statements/02.2.html>)

American Geophysical Union
(http://www.agu.org/pubs/pubs_guidelines.html)

American Mathematical Society
(<http://www.ams.org/secretary/ethics.html>)

1. Society Officers, Councilors, and Society Staff

- 1.1. Council is responsible for setting policy for all GSA publications and appointing editors of books and journals. The Publications Committee, as an appointed committee of Council,

offers advice and makes recommendations on publication policy to Council.

- 1.2. The Executive Director is responsible for ensuring that publications policies enacted by Council are carried out.
- 1.3. Editors of books and journals are expected to carry out editorial duties in a manner consonant with policies set by Council and consistent with the Bylaws of the Society. They should work closely with the Executive Director and appropriate GSA headquarters staff (e.g., Director of Publications, Managing Editors, etc.).
- 1.4. Editors have full responsibility for editorial and technical decisions on journal and book content. Society Officers, Councilors, and headquarters staff (including the Executive Director) should not intervene or comment on editorial decisions on individual manuscripts.
- 1.5. Inquiries from Councilors and Officers on manuscripts under consideration will be handled in the same manner as communications from the general membership, which reflects the editorial staff's standard practices. Communications from Officers and Councilors about editorial business are considered official Society business, unless otherwise identified. Official inquiries will receive prompt and complete action that becomes part of the Society's official record.

2. Editors, Associate Editors, and Guest Editors of Books

The term Editor as used below refers to Editors, Associate Editors, Guest Editors of books, and Editorial Board members when delegated to serve in an editorial capacity.

- 2.1. Editors will give manuscripts unbiased consideration.
- 2.2. Editors should process manuscripts rapidly.
- 2.3. The Editor has sole responsibility for acceptance or rejection of a manuscript. Manuscripts should have peer review, but the Editor may reject or accept for cause (inappropriate for journal, clearly of poor quality, contents previously published elsewhere, etc.)
- 2.4. The Editor and editorial staff should not disclose information about submitted manuscripts except to reviewers, Associate Editors, Editorial Board members, and GSA publications staff. Information about a manuscript may be shared, with the author's permission, once a manuscript is accepted and scheduled for publication (e.g., new releases, pre-publication posting of the abstract, or inclusion in a list of contents, etc.).
- 2.5. Responsibility for manuscripts submitted by the Editor should be delegated to another Editor, Associate Editor, or Editorial Board member.
- 2.6. The Editor should not handle manuscripts for which there is a real or perceived conflict of interest. Examples include, but are not restricted to, past (within the last 5 years) or current collaboration, personal friend, employer or employee, family relationship, institutional relationship, past or present graduate advisor or advisee, someone with whom the reviewer has had a past or on-going scientific controversy, or situations where the Editor could stand to gain economically by publication or rejection of the manuscript. Editorial responsibility should be delegated to another Editor, Associate Editor, or Editorial Board member.
- 2.7. The Editor should not use information, data, theories, or interpretations of submitted manuscript in her/his own work until that manuscript is in press or published unless the author has given permission to do so.
- 2.8. If an Editor is presented with convincing evidence that the main substance or conclusions of a publication are erroneous, he/she should facilitate publication of a report (e.g., correction, follow-up manuscript, or other appropriate means) pointing out the error and, if possible, correcting it. The report may be

written by the person who discovered the error or by the original author.

3. Authors and Co-authors

- 3.1. Manuscripts should contain original, new results, data, ideas and/or interpretations not previously published or under consideration for publication elsewhere (including electronic media and databases).
- 3.2. Authors should be encouraged to avoid fragmentation of their published submitted work where practical.
- 3.3. Authors should inform the Editor of related manuscripts under consideration elsewhere and provide copies if requested.
- 3.4. Fabrication of data, results, selective reporting of data, theft of intellectual property of others, and plagiarism are unethical practices and unacceptable.
- 3.5. Information obtained privately (e.g., in conversation, correspondence, or discussion with third parties) should not be used or reported in a manuscript without explicit permission from the party with whom the information originated. Information obtained in the course of confidential services (e.g., refereeing manuscripts or grant applications) should be treated similarly.
- 3.6. Manuscripts will contain proper citation of works by others, especially publications of the original hypotheses, ideas, and/or data upon which manuscript is based
- 3.7. Data and/or samples (especially unusual or rare materials) upon which a publication is based should be made available to other scientists, except in special circumstances (patent protection, privacy, etc.), in the manuscript or through accessible data repositories, databases, museum collections, or other means when requested.

3.8. Authorship

- 3.8.1. Authorship should be limited to those who have made significant contributions to the concept, design, execution or interpretation of the work reported in a manuscript; others who have contributed should be acknowledged;
 - 3.8.2. Author order should be agreed on by all authors as should any changes in authors and order that occur while the manuscript is under review or revision. Changes in authorship must be submitted to the Editor in writing and must be signed by all authors involved.
 - 3.8.3. Authors and co-authors should review and ensure the accuracy and validity of results prior to submission; co-authors should have opportunity to review manuscript before submission.
- 3.9. Authors should reveal to the Editor any potential conflict of interest (e.g., a consulting or financial interest in a company), that might be affected by publication of the results contained in a manuscript. The authors should ensure that no contractual relations or proprietary considerations exist that would affect the publication of information in a submitted manuscript.
- 3.10. Authors are encouraged to disclose major funding sources (e.g., government agencies, private foundations, private industry, universities) for reported research.
- 3.11. Prepublication via internet or other methods is prohibited.

4. Reviewers

- 4.1. A reviewer should disclose real or perceived conflict of interests to the Editor **before** agreeing to write a review. Examples include, but are not restricted to, past (within the last 5 years) or current collaboration, personal friend, employer or employee, family relationship, institutional relationship, past or present graduate advisor or advisee, someone with whom the reviewer has had a past or on-going scientific controversy, or situations where the reviewer could stand to gain economically by publication or rejection of the manuscript. The Editor will

decide if the conflict is severe enough to prevent the reviewer from writing a fair, objective review.

- 4.2. A reviewer should decline to review a manuscript if she/he feels technically unqualified, if a timely review can't be done, or if the manuscript is from a scientific competitor with whom the reviewer has had an acrimonious professional relationship, or a conflict of interest as defined above (section 4.1).
- 4.3. Reviewers should be encouraged, but not required, to sign reviews. The Editor will preserve anonymity of reviewers should a reviewer elect to remain anonymous.
- 4.4. Reviewers should treat the manuscript as confidential.
- 4.5. Reviewers should ask the Editor for permission to discuss the paper with others for specific advice, giving names and reasons for such consultation.
- 4.6. Reviewers should not pass the manuscript to another to carry out the review without permission from the Editor.
- 4.7. Reviewers should not use information, data, theories, or interpretations of the manuscript in their own work until that manuscript is in press or published unless the author has given permission to do so.
- 4.8. Reviewers should clearly support and justify the basis for their review analysis.
- 4.9. Reviewers should alert the Editor to similar manuscripts published or under consideration for publication elsewhere in the event they are aware of such. However, it is the responsibility of the Editor, not the reviewer, to decide on the proper course of action once so informed.