

SSR Publications Committee: Standard Operating Procedures

SSR Bylaws Article XI, Section 4 (c): A Publications Committee composed of five or more Regular Members of the Society shall be responsible for the management of all publications of the Society. The Committee shall recommend to the Board of Directors candidates for editorial leadership. It will make recommendations regarding editorial policy and fiscal matters related to publications.

Duties:

The Publications Committee shall be responsible for oversight of all SSR electronic and print publication activities (including *Biology of Reproduction*, web sites for *Biology of Reproduction* and SSR, annual meeting program and abstract books, the SSR *Newsletter*, and incidental brochures) and for reporting the Committee's assessments of these activities and recommendations to the Board of Directors. The Committee shall evaluate proposals and requests regarding publications from SSR members, the Board, and the Editor(s)-in-Chief; provide advice and recommendations for action to the Board concerning editorial policies, ethical and legal issues related to SSR publications, management and fiscal health of *Biology of Reproduction*, and other matters considered pertinent by the Committee; and identify and recommend to the Board candidates to serve as Editor(s)-in-Chief of *Biology of Reproduction*.

Procedures:

1. The Committee Chair(s) or her/his nominee shall serve as an *ex officio* member of the Board of Directors and shall attend the summer and mid-winter Board meetings.
2. The Committee shall carry out its responsibilities for management of all SSR publications by: a) Addressing issues that are immediate or long-term challenges facing *Biology of Reproduction*; b) Evaluating issues referred to or raised by the Committee; c) Transmitting Committee recommendations for actions to the Board; and d) Ensuring that publication policies established by the Board are discharged by the Managing Editor and Editors-in-Chief. Issues involving animal or scientific ethics shall be evaluated by the responsible subcommittee. The Committee shall communicate by email or conference call to develop timely and informed recommendations.
3. The Committee shall recommend to the Board a statement on the policies for management of the Journal to be made available to the Members of the Society, as required by Article XII, Section 2 of the SSR Bylaws. This statement shall include the procedure for selection of the editorial leadership and contain information about the general editorial policies of the Journal.
4. The Committee shall monitor changes in the scientific publication field, the relative costs and benefits to authors for publishing in *Biology of Reproduction* and the fiscal health of the Journal. The Committee Chair(s) may attend relevant publishers' meetings

and/or workshops to remain current on academic publishing issues. The Committee shall recommend to the Board a business model for the Journal that addresses the goals of the Society and expectations of authors and readers, while enhancing the quality and ensuring the long-term health of the Journal. Recommendations on Journal fiscal issues will be established in collaboration with the Treasurer and the Executive Director.

5. The Committee shall submit reports to the Board for consideration at the summer Society and mid-winter Board meetings that address the Duties of the Committee and provide advice and recommendations for action on issues regarding Society publications. The reports are to be submitted to the SSR Business Office approximately 3 weeks in advance of the meetings.

6. Current and new members of the Committee shall meet at the annual Society meeting to review activities of the Committee during the past year and to discuss proposals and suggestions referred to the Committee for evaluation during the coming year. The Board Liaison, SSR President, Editor(s)-in-Chief, Executive Director, and journal editorial staff members are encouraged to attend as *ex officio* members.

7. The Committee Chair(s) shall prepare articles for the SSR *Newsletter* regarding developments involving or affecting Society publications and are of interest to members. The articles are due approximately one month prior to online publication of the *Newsletter* in the months of February, June, and October.

8. The Committee shall identify candidates to serve as Editor(s)-in-Chief of *Biology of Reproduction* and submit to the Board of Directors a list of candidates to be evaluated for appointment to a four-year term. The procedures for this process are described in detail in Appendix I.

Subcommittees

- Research Ethics Subcommittee: The primary role of the Research Ethics Subcommittee is to report to the Publications Committee on ethical issues relating to research activities. These include obligations of authors for the performance of research being reported, for referees involved in the manuscript review process, and for editors to maintain the highest standards of ethical behavior for publication in *Biology of Reproduction*. The Chair of this Subcommittee is a member of the Publication Committee. (See Appendix III)
- Animal Ethics Subcommittee: The primary role of the Animal Ethics Subcommittee is to report to the Publications Committee on issues related to the humane care and use of animals in research. The Subcommittee will provide recommendations on animal care issues associated with manuscripts submitted for publication in *Biology of Reproduction*; on policy and guidelines for studies involving the use of animals that are submitted for publication in *Biology of Reproduction* by investigators not subject to NIH, HHS, or USDA regulations; on the development of position statements on research of particular interest to the public such as reproductive

technologies or stem cell research and cloning; and on matters regarding public education on the role and importance of animal research in reproductive sciences. The Chair of this Subcommittee is a member of the Publication Committee. (See Appendix IV)

Attachments:

Appendix I: Editor-in-Chief Search, *Biology of Reproduction*

Appendix II: Notice: Editor-in-Chief Search, *Biology of Reproduction*

Appendix III: Ethical Guidelines for Publication of Research Results in *Biology of Reproduction*

Appendix IV: The Care and Use of Experimental Animals

Modifications to this SOP require Board approval before they are applicable.

SSR: 2/20/2010

Appendix I: Search Timeline for *Biology of Reproduction* Editor(s)-in-Chief

The Publications Committee shall be responsible for identifying and recommending to the Board candidates to be appointed to serve a four-year term as Editor(s)-in-Chief of *Biology of Reproduction*. The duration of appointment may be extended upon mutual agreement by the Board and Editor(s)-in-Chief.

- a) The Publication Committee Chair(s), in consultation with the SSR Business Office, will prepare the “Notice of Search for Editor-in-Chief, *Biology of Reproduction*” for inclusion in the October and November issues of *Biology of Reproduction* and October Issue of the *SSR Newsletter*. A sample notice is included as Appendix II.
- b) The Publication Committee Chair(s), in consultation with the SSR Business Office, will prepare an Application Packet to be sent to nominated individuals and/or individuals expressing an interest in applying for the position.
- c) The Publications Committee Chair(s) shall participate as an *ex officio* member in the interview of Editor-in-Chief finalists at a meeting convened by the Board of Directors.

Schedule:

Spring, Year 2 of Current Editor(s)-in-Chief term: Prepare "notice of search" and announce search in the June *SSR Newsletter* and August and September issues of *Biology of Reproduction* (sample: Appendix II); update and prepare application packets

August - September, Year 2: Send application packets to potential candidates

October, Year 2 – January, Year 3: Applications due October 15 - Screen applications and submit a short list of applicants to the Board at the 20XX mid-winter meeting in February

March - June, Year 3: Further screening and interviews of applicants on the short list

July, Year 3: Present recommendation to the Board at the annual SSR meeting

August, Year 3 – January, Year 4: New Editor(s)-in-Chief will consult with outgoing Editor(s)-in-Chief, journal editorial office and SSR Business Office concerning implementation of new editorial office

February, Year 4: New Editor(s)-in-Chief will attend mid-winter Board meeting and submit budget and recommendations for composition of Editorial Board

July 1, Year 4: New Editor(s)-in-Chief assume duties

Appendix II: Notice: Editor(s)-in-Chief Search *Biology of Reproduction*

The Board of Directors of the Society for the Study of Reproduction (SSR) has requested the Publications Committee commence a search for successors to the Editor(s)-in-Chief of *Biology of Reproduction*, Drs. ----- and -----, whose term ends June 30, 20XX. Therefore, we are now seeking applicants for the position of Editor(s)-in-Chief, whose duties will start officially on July 1, 20XX and extend through June 30, 20XX.

Applicants should be active scientists with a distinguished record of service to the SSR, a broad background in reproductive sciences, an appreciation for integrative as well as cellular/molecular approaches, and a strong commitment to fairness and high standards for publication. Applicants must be fully committed to maintaining *Biology of Reproduction* as the premiere journal in its field.

If you are interested in applying for the position of Editor(s)-in-Chief, or wish to nominate qualified individuals for this important and prestigious position, please contact ----, the Chair(s) of the Publications Committee for ---- (email address); -----, Board Liaison (email address); or any member of the Publications Committee (see below). Guidelines for submitting an application packet will be forwarded to nominees beginning October 1, 20XX. The deadline for applications is December 31, 20XX.

---- Chair(s), (email address)

---- Board Liaison (email address)

---- Publication Committee member (email address)

Appendix III: Ethical Guidelines for Publication of Research Results in Biology of Reproduction

The Society for the Study of Reproduction (SSR) is dedicated to maintaining the highest standards of ethical behavior for publication in its journal, *Biology of Reproduction*. The SSR Board of Directors has approved the following guidelines for performance of research being reported, for the review process, and for the procedure to be followed in event of alleged misconduct. The following statement is not meant to be all-inclusive, but is provided to give a clear understanding of the ethical considerations involved. These Guidelines supplement the “Instructions for Authors” (<http://www.ssr.org/bor/guides/AuthorInstructions.html>)

A. Obligations of Authors

1) Report of Research Findings

The principal obligation of all authors is to provide an accurate, honest, and precise account of the research performed. Each manuscript shall contain the description of a complete, unique study that has not been submitted, either in part or as a whole, for publication elsewhere. Each author of the study shall be cognizant of the research and is responsible for its validity and accuracy. The author(s) have the following obligations.

1. To certify that no scientific misconduct (as defined below) occurred in the performance or reporting of the research.
2. To describe the research in sufficient detail for others to be able to repeat it.
3. To include all relevant data, even those that may contradict the hypotheses being tested.
4. To acknowledge previous contributions with accurate citations.
5. To follow all criteria for ethical conduct of research with animals and/or humans, and to include statements to this effect in the body of the manuscript.
6. To make available to other researchers all reagents and research materials not commercially available, including but not limited to plasmids, antibodies, cell lines, hybridomas, DNA sequences, and expression array data used in the studies reported.
7. To ensure that the submitted manuscript once accepted is not materially altered in the proof stage. All changes, other than minor textual ones, must be approved by the Editor(s)-in-Chief.
8. To ensure that correct nomenclature is used for DNA, mRNA, and proteins; that all DNA and protein sequences are deposited into public data bases; and that genes discussed are properly annotated with the correct genetic nomenclature such that information about them may be retrieved from public sources.

2) Definition of Scientific Misconduct

Scientific misconduct includes plagiarism; fabrication; falsification; selection of data; duplicate publications; violation of international, federal, or state rules; and honorary authorship. SSR accepts the definition of falsification and plagiarism stated in the “ORI

Handbook for Institutional Research Integrity Officers” (1997), Office of Research Integrity, Public Health Service of the US Department of Health and Human Services (Washington, DC; http://ori.dhhs.gov/documents/rio_handbook.pdf). In this case, plagiarism includes but is not limited to theft and misappropriation of intellectual property or textual copying of other peoples’ work and representing the work as the author’s own, and falsification includes the willful fabrication or manipulation of research data or the deliberate exclusion or alteration of data that is contrary to the experiments reported.

3) *The Use of Experimental Subjects*

All studies involving human subjects or human tissue must be in accordance with the principles set out in the Declaration of Helsinki and must have been formally approved by the appropriate institutional review board, ethical review committee, or equivalent. All manuscripts shall indicate that such approval was obtained, and the study populations shall be described in detail. In many studies, details of age, race, and sex are important. In experiments involving any significant risk or discomfort to subjects, it shall be documented that informed consent was obtained from the subjects and that an institutional human research committee approved the investigations. In text, tables, and figures, subjects must be identified by number or letter rather than by initials or names. Photographs of patients’ faces shall be included only if scientifically relevant. Authors shall obtain written consent from the patient for use of such photographs. A statement that these guidelines were followed shall appear in the Materials and Methods section of the manuscript. The Editor(s)-in-Chief reserve the right to reject any manuscript that does not meet acceptable standards of research behavior as determined by the Belmont Report (<http://ohsr.od.nih.gov/guidelines/belmont.html#top>), the Geneva Convention (<http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>), and the Declaration of Helsinki (<http://ohsr.od.nih.gov/guidelines/helsinki.html#top>).

4) *Authorship*

Signature on the Statement of Authorship and Copyright Transfer form is required of all authors and indicates that each author is aware of the contents and has significantly contributed to the study reported. All authors must have participated in the research reported either in its conception, performance, or interpretation. An acknowledgment is appropriate for those who have contributed to a lesser extent, such as by providing a reagent or reviewing the data or draft of the manuscript. All authors will share full responsibility for the work and accountability for the results. Potential financial conflicts of interest by the authors must be disclosed in the cover letter, with appropriate documentation provided, if necessary.

5) *No Prior or Concurrent Reporting of Findings*

Authors of manuscripts submitted to *Biology of Reproduction* must agree that the substance of the research being reported has not been submitted or published elsewhere.

If parts of the report have been presented in a preliminary report, such as an abstract or a poster, this occurrence must be stated but does not preclude publication. Presentation of data at conferences and publication of abstracts relevant to that report, such as at the SSR Annual Meeting, will not ordinarily influence the review of a manuscript as original data for the published report of the study. If some parts of the data have been reported in a review, a copy of the review must be provided to the Editor(s)-in-Chief along with the submitted manuscript.

B. Obligations of Reviewers (Referees)

The timely, critical review of manuscripts is an essential stage in publication of *Biology of Reproduction*. A reviewer is expected to make expert, critical, and unbiased scientific and literary appraisals of research reports in her/his field of knowledge and expertise. The reviewer shall return completed reviews promptly, within the Editor(s)-in-Chief's deadline.

A reviewer shall not review a manuscript if:

1. The individual does not feel competent to appraise the research or issues in the manuscript.
2. The reviewer believes there may be a conflict of interest or that a close personal or professional relationship with the author(s) will bias judgment of the manuscript.
3. The reviewer has published with the authors within the previous three years.

If there is any doubt in these areas, the manuscript shall be returned un-reviewed to the Editor(s)-in-Chief with an explanation. The Editor(s)-in-Chief shall also be notified if the referee previously reviewed the manuscript for another journal.

Manuscripts are confidential and no part of the manuscript under review shall be revealed to others. Therefore individuals other than the assigned reviewer shall not provide independent reviews for the referee to sign. If a designated reviewer has the need to consult a colleague or collaborator regarding review of a manuscript, then the reviewer must seek prior approval from the Editor(s)-in Chief. The colleague or collaborator, as well as reviewer, agree to the obligations of confidentiality and non-use. The reviewer's critique of a manuscript, especially if the overall judgment is unfavorable, shall be detailed, supported by appropriate references, and made available to the author. The reviewer shall note when there is concern that the author(s) may not have fulfilled the obligations in Section A. The reviewer shall report any substantial similarity of the manuscript to a published paper or another submitted manuscript and shall note when important work of others is improperly cited or omitted. The decision to recommend acceptance shall be based on an unbiased appraisal of the scientific and literary quality of the manuscript.

C. Guidelines for the Editors

The Editor(s)-in-Chief directs the publication process for *Biology of Reproduction* and is responsible for maintaining the scientific and literary quality of the journal. The final decision regarding acceptance or rejection of a manuscript for publication is the responsibility of the Editor(s)-in-Chief. The Associate Editors identify possible reviewers for manuscripts, evaluate the reviews, and advise the Editor(s)-in-Chief on the suitability of the manuscript for publication.

A primary obligation of the Editor(s)-in-Chief and the Associate Editors is to make certain that all manuscripts submitted for publication receive confidential, expert, and unbiased reviews in a timely fashion. The Editor(s)-in-Chief and the Associate Editors shall not select referees for a predictable outcome of the review. Once reviews are in hand, the Associate Editors shall make prompt recommendation to the Editor(s)-in-Chief, who shall reach a speedy decision on the manuscript. While one of the functions of the Editor(s)-in-Chief is to act as an ombudsman, protecting the author from unfair or slow referees, the Editor(s)-in-Chief and the Associate Editors cannot unilaterally impose sanctions on unethical referees apart from ceasing to call upon them for reviews. The Editor(s)-in-Chief and the Associate Editors shall not use their position to change an honest, albeit controversial, interpretation of authors' results in a manuscript.

The Editor(s)-in-Chief and the Associate Editors may not participate in any part of the editorial management of manuscripts from his/her own research. Manuscripts submitted by an Editor(s)-in-Chief will be handled by a Consulting Editor selected by the Board of Directors. Manuscripts submitted by Associate Editors will be handled by the Editor(s)-in-Chief. The Editor(s)-in-Chief and the Associate Editors must also avoid conflict of interest in the editorial management of papers closely related to their own research. The Editor(s)-in-Chief and Associate Editors may not use unpublished information from a submitted manuscript without written permission of the author.

D. Due Process and Response

Allegations or complaints involving possible violation of the ethical guidelines presented above shall be submitted to or forwarded to the Editor(s)-in-Chief, who will then contact the author to request an explanation. If the Editor(s)-in-Chief feels that further investigation is warranted, she/he will contact the Chair of the SSR Publications Committee and the SSR President. These representatives of the Society will determine whether the allegations of misconduct need to be transmitted to the author's home institution. If such action becomes necessary, the home institution will be asked to keep the SSR President informed during any investigation and to provide written notification of the findings of any inquiry or investigation.

If an investigation by the home institution concludes that an SSR member or *Biology of Reproduction* author has committed serious scientific error or misconduct, then the President will distribute the investigation's report to the SSR Board of Directors (and send a copy to the author) for consideration of disciplinary measures. If institutional

investigation provides convincing evidence that data or analyses in a paper published in *Biology of Reproduction* are erroneous, the Editor(s)-in-Chief shall facilitate prompt publication of a report pointing out the error and, if possible, correcting it or, if necessary, retracting the paper. The report may be written by an original author or, if necessary, the Editor(s)-in-Chief's office. If misconduct was uncovered during the host institution's investigation, penalties may range from an official reprimand to removal from specific Society responsibilities, or dismissal from the Society. The penalty may also include temporary or permanent withdrawal of permission to publish in the Society's journal. If there is evidence that serious author misconduct is associated with any paper published in *Biology of Reproduction*, the Editor(s)-in-Chief shall promptly publish a notice of retraction.

Appendix IV: The Care and Use of Experimental Animals

SSR acknowledges that all animals are creatures of great intrinsic value and remarkable complexity. The use of nonhuman animals in research can contribute uniquely to the advancement of scientific knowledge, and thus, ultimately, to improvements in the health or welfare of humans and animals.

All investigators shall follow the highest possible standards for the humane care and use of animals in research. During development of the research plan, due consideration shall be given to the use of in vitro models, the appropriateness of the animal species, and the minimum number of animals needed to meet rigorous scientific and statistical standards. Animals bred specifically for laboratory study shall be used whenever practical; however, there are situations where wild, captive, random-source, or pound animals are necessary.

All research animals shall be acquired, retained, and used in compliance with federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Research animals shall be properly housed and fed, and their surroundings shall be kept in sanitary condition in accordance with the National Research Council's publication, *Guide for Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*¹ (the "NIH Guide"), and the *Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Agricultural Research and Teaching*, Federation of Animal Science Societies, First Revised Edition, 1999², or appropriate approval from respective International Institutional Care Committees.

Research animals shall receive appropriate anesthetics, analgesics, tranquilizers, and care to minimize pain and discomfort during preoperative, operative, and postoperative procedures. The choice and use of the most appropriate drug shall be made in strict accordance with the NIH Guide, and all procedures shall be those of accepted veterinary medical practice. If the study or the condition of the animal requires that the animal be killed, a humane method shall be employed.³ Use of animals shall be under the direct supervision of an experienced teacher or investigator.

Institutional approval is required for all animal studies and such approval shall be stated in the manuscript. A statement that these guidelines were followed shall appear in the Materials and Methods section of the manuscript.

¹*Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*. Institute for Laboratory Animal Research (ILAR) of the National Academy of Science, Bethesda, MD. 1996. Contact ILAR@nas.edu (e-mail) or 1-800-624-6242 for a free copy.

²*Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Agricultural Research and Teaching*. Federation of Animal Science Societies, Savoy, Illinois. First Revised Edition; 1999.

³Report of the AVMA Panel on Euthanasia (JAVMA 1993; 202:229-249).

*Directors can serve as ex officio members on committees, but should not be members of committees. While they are members of the Board of Directors, they cannot be chairs of committees. Ex officio members and Board Liaisons can participate in all committee communications and discussions, but they cannot vote on committees. Trainee members can serve on committees when invited and participate in all committee communications and discussions. The trainees on the committee can vote.**

**As approved by the SSR Board of Directors at the 2012 Summer Board Meeting.*