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Sydney Freeman Jr.
University of Idaho

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About the Author(s)
Dr. Sydney Freeman is an associate professor of Adult, Organizational Learning and Leadership at the University of Idaho. He is a former National Holmes Scholar, a certified faculty developer through the Learning Resources Network and an affiliate of the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Minority Serving Institutions. His research investigates the challenges facing higher education administration programs, specifically, higher education as a field of study and the university presidency. He serves on multiple academic journal editorial and review boards, including serving as managing editor of the Journal of HBCU Research + Culture. He also is the founder and editor-in-chief of The Journal for the Study of Postsecondary and Tertiary Education.

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THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM OF STARTING AN OPEN-ACCESS ONLINE JOURNAL: AN EDITOR'S REFLECTION

Sydney Freeman Jr., University of Idaho

Introduction

Certain scholarly activities, such as establishing a journal, are not taught in graduate school. These skills are often learned only by shadowing and being mentored by an experienced editor or perhaps slowly and painfully learning by doing. There is a "hidden curriculum" of implicit expectations and rules to which editors must negotiate in order to maintain scholarly credibility. This process of uncovering unspoken rules and expectations can be daunting for first-time journal editors. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to ease the struggles of scholars who would like to contribute to their fields by establishing journals; it serves to make implicit rules and expectations explicit. The narrative that is given in this article also serves as an example for interested researchers and faculty, providing an account of one journal editor's reflection who has successfully navigated the process and emerged with practical insights.

Review of the Literature

There is a paucity of academic literature detailing an appropriate process for scholars to follow when establishing a new journal (Eve, 2016). While scholarly literature is generous in its coverage of—and guidance through—the article publication process for graduate students and junior faculty, there is much less guidance available to scholars who wish to establish new journals (Wilkinson, 2015; Altman & Baruch, 2008; Hartley, 2008). Much of the available literature on this topic is descriptive, rather than prescriptive. Existing publications tend to focus either on explaining the workings of journals, listing considerations for those interested in founding new journals, or implicitly expecting potential journal founders to work out the establishment process for themselves.

Elsevier, for example, a leading publisher for science journals, offers its rationale for determining the necessity of new journals; it seeks to ensure that prospective journals are being established in areas of new market or knowledge expansion and that these journals do not completely overlap with existing journals in purpose, perspective, or professional audience (Terheggen, 2012). The University of Kansas (N.D.) offers a list of operational considerations for those interested in beginning a journal, though this list serves more as a means of ensuring that scholars understand the administrative decisions to be made when establishing a journal than it does as a step-by-step guide, or an explanation of *how* those decisions should be made. These considerations take the form of questions, as listed below:

What is the journal's purpose? What unique niche will it fill?
What is the administrative structure of the journal? Editorial board? Advisory board?
What standards will you use to judge articles for inclusion?
Who will do copy editing and proofreading?
What is the format of the journal? Print, online, or both?
Is the journal going to be Open Access, available only by subscription, or a combination?

> Where is the journal going to be hosted/printed? Is there a Memorandum of Agreement (or Memorandum of Understanding) that spells out expectations for the journal and the host/printer?
> Who will obtain the journal's ISSN from the Library of Congress' ISSN website?
> What are the terms for the journal's publication agreements with authors?
> How will the journal be funded initially? How will funding for the journal be sustained?
> How will you recruit peer reviewers?
> How will you solicit content?
> How will you advertise your journal? (para. 2).

Similarly, the Scholarly Publication and Resources Coalition (SPARC, 2002) offers a manual for non-profit academic publications, particularly those intended for online publication. This manual, while a valuable source describing the "nuts and bolts" of business plans and the general administrative structures of a journal, it functions more as an explanation of the business workings of a journal than as a guide for an academic concerned with establishing and maintaining scholarly credibility or contributing to his or her field. Morris, Barnas, LaFrenier, and Reich (2013), in *The Handbook of Journal Publishing*, also describe the business workings of academic journals, including chapters on "Managing journals," "Editing," "The production process," "Journal metrics," "Marketing and sales," "Fulfillment," "Journal finances," "Subsidiary income," "Contract publishing," "Copyright and other legal aspects," "Ethical issues," and "The future of scholarly communication." While mastery of these topics is vital to the academic who wishes to establish a new scholarly journal, this resource approaches each topic primarily descriptively; there is little content targeted explicitly toward guiding scholars through the process of establishing new journals.

It is apparent, of course, that there are struggles associated with establishing and gaining scholarly credibility for a new academic journal. One such struggle is soliciting valuable contributions. In the words of Villard and Nudds (2008),

> Prospective authors, especially researchers in their early career, are especially cautious about where they send manuscripts. Journal impact factors have become so important in deciding appointments and research grants that some researchers are reluctant to submit manuscripts to a journal that has yet to be indexed, for fear that it will not receive as much attention, or carry as much weight, as it otherwise might (p. 7).

Other struggles affecting new academic journals, according to Simon Fraser University (2013) may include high startup costs, lack of visibility, and difficulties associated with finding reviewers and editors.

Online journals bring their own set of unique challenges. One of the biggest hurdles for online journals, according to Kumar (2013), is that of establishing credibility. Because it is relatively easy to begin an online journal without adhering to professional and academic standards of quality, there are many open access journals of ill repute in the academic world; they are sometimes referred to as predatory, in that they may publish without peer review yet charge authors publication fees nonetheless (Quarrie, 2013; Jefferson Library Guides, 2017). Altbach and Rapple (2012) add that the online, open-access movement is still relatively new; thus, it has not yet gained the same standing within the academic community as have older publication models.

Despite the fact that there is little formal guidance available to those who wish to establish new academic journals, there are a handful of case studies documenting the establishment of online, open access journals in several fields. Haggerty (2008) describes the process of transitioning the previously existing sociology journal, *The Canadian Journal of Sociology*, to an open-access model, concluding that such a transition is arduous for the journal yet beneficial to the academic world. Solomon (2007) recounts founding an online, open-access medical education journal at a time in 1996 when the entire concept of an online journal was a great novelty; the ultimate success of this small, volunteer-staffed journal demonstrates that similar publications can serve valuable purposes in the scholarly community. Felczak, Lorimer, & Smith (2007) describe the forays of an existing print journal, the *Canadian Journal of Communication*, into the world of online publication, providing strategies for other transitioning journals to follow. Björk & Turk (2006) compare the performance and reputation of an early online, open-access journal of which Björk was founding editor-in-chief to that of its print-based peers, demonstrating that it is possible for open-access journals to achieve the same successes as print-based journals.

Yet apart from the descriptions of the way journals function and the hardships journals tend to experience when they are newly established, as well as the few existing case studies describing the founding of online, open-access journals, there is little scholarly information available to guide academics interested in establishing new journals, particularly from the personal viewpoint of a journal editor. This article, therefore, is designed to begin filling the gap in the literature by providing a scholarly personal narrative account of the process of developing an academic journal. The narrative portion of the article can be used as an example for others to consider, an example that demystifies the process of this untaught scholarly activity.

Methodology

Scholarly personal narrative (SPN), an innovative qualitative research methodology, was chosen as the approach for this article because it allows—and requires—researchers to utilize their own experiences as fodder for scholarly inquiry and writing. SPN, according to Nash (2004), presupposes that

> Your own life tells a story (or a series of stories) that, when narrated well, can deliver to your readers those delicious aha! moments of self and social insight that are all too rare in the more conventional forms of research (p. 24).

This is accomplished, according to Nash (2004), by means of a narrative steeped in the author's context and perspective and rich in the author's authentic voice. Such a narrative is not designed to be a purveyor of a single objective truth. Rather, it is intended to be an expression of truth from the writer's perspective.

Naturally, such an approach has its detractors and its limitations. SPN, as described by Nash (2004), is a thoroughly postmodern approach; writers of SPN make no pretense of objectivity in their narratives, reasoning that "no objective, impartial truth ever exists outside of a constructivist narrative" (p. 38). Rather, Nash (2004) writes, "We see what we believe; we observe what we narrate; we transform what we reframe" (p. 45).

This, in and of itself, is a challenge for upholders of traditional research methods that require the researcher to let the data speak for themselves. In SPN, the researcher is inextricably linked to the data; allowing the data to speak for itself means that researchers must be explicitly involved in that speaking process. Such an open lack of objectivity, coupled with such personal involvement on the part of the researcher, does not, however, render SPN a "relative free-for-all." Instead, SPN claims its own set of postmodern criteria for truth, accuracy, validity, and reliability. Nash (2004) explains that the truth of SPN is determined by the "trustworthiness, honesty, plausibility, situatedness, introspectiveness/self-reflection, and universalizability" (p. 38) of the writer and the narrative, and that ". . . contending truth narratives and perspectives. . .

[should] bump up against one another, so that our own narratives can be kept honest" (p. 40). In this process,

> SPN writers may or may not believe in the existence of ultimate, unassailable truths. But they are always on the lookout in their own work to avoid confusing matters of personal temperament and taste with the need to enlighten others about *the truth*—once and for all (p. 41).

Such a postmodern approach is particularly useful for uncovering details and viewpoints that would be unavailable outside of mainstream narratives. Nash and Viray (2013), for instance, demonstrate that SPN is an appropriate venue for marginalized individuals and group members to express information that could be otherwise overlooked or suppressed. Ritchey (2016) effectively employs SPN to express the voice of an individual with multiple minority identities as she navigated her way through higher education, providing readers with a fuller perspective of the process than what would otherwise be available. Similarly, Skiff (2016) uses SPN to explain the challenges he personally encountered in building an open learning organization in higher education. Additionally, Ng and Carney (2017) demonstrate SPN's interdisciplinary value, as it "gives scholars across the disciplines a means for analyzing how their experiences intentionally and unintentionally contribute to the educational context of their classes and institutions" (pg. 11).

In this present study, I offer my own experiences in a narrative form based on the understanding that others have had different, and perhaps even conflicting, experiences. I make no claims that my narrative is the final word on beginning a new scholarly journal, nor do I argue that others should generalize extensively based on my story. Instead, I offer my experiences as a roadmap of sorts—a means of demonstrating to readers how I arrived at my destination (the establishment of a new journal), but not by any means the only route to that destination. My narrative was constructed from a series of interviews designed to uncover my reasons for establishing a new scholarly journal, as well as to elicit my experiences during the process. I have recounted all of this for the purpose of presenting an example to other scholars who have never been explicitly taught how to establish an academic journal; it is my hope that this narrative will make the process of founding a journal seem more real and obtainable by informing readers of the potential challenges and rewards inherent to this scholarly activity.

Narrative

As the following narrative is based on my experiences during the process of establishing the Journal for the Study of Postsecondary and Tertiary Education (JSPTE), I find it appropriate to provide a brief summary of the organizational structure and roles of those associated with the journal. For ease of reference, this is provided via Table 1 below.

Table 1. Structure of JSPTE.

Role	Responsibilities	Skill Set	Time/Cost
Senior Editor-in-Chief (Senior EIC) (Volunteer)	Ensure the academic quality of the journal. Leads the editorial board.	Strong academic qualifications. Sets vision for the journal.	N/A
Editor-in-Chief (EIC)	Manages the day-to-day operations of the journal. Solicits	Strong academic qualifications, administrative &	Recommended that release time equivalent to two courses be

(Volunteer)	articles. Solicits reviewers. Maintains financial records relevant to the journal.	financial management, wide base of academic & professional contacts, competent with software applications.	provided to the faculty member for this role.
Managing/Associate Editor-in-Chief (Paid)	Administration of all articles through the review process to publishing, ensuring timely processing of the articles.	Process administration, communication, and understanding of the publishing process, competent with software applications.	Estimated to be 10 to 12 hours per week for a journal that is published 2 times per year.
Editorial Board Members (Volunteer)	An academic direction of the journal in consultation with the Editor. Commitment to review 3-5 articles per year.	The board should have strong and diverse academic & professional experience. Should be expanded to be multi-institution when possible.	These individuals typically perform the function as part of their overall professional duties and the time demands are not onerous.
Review Board (Volunteer)	Review research articles, scholarly articles, graduate student publications, theory to practice papers/tips and book reviews.	Strong record of previously published peer-reviewed work.	Review two articles or book reviews per year.
Advisory Board (Volunteer)	Provide counsel regarding the direction of the journal.	Senior scholars who have previously served as editors of an academic journal.	Meet two times a year to discuss the direction of the journal. And review one article or book review per year.

How the Journal Came To Be

I began the process of establishing a new academic journal at a crossroads in my career. After graduating with my doctorate and beginning a career as an administrator in higher education, I found myself in the position of negotiating for a full-time faculty position while simultaneously working with a publisher to establish JSPTE. While I worked with great determination to make the journal a reality, and while I wholeheartedly devoted myself to excellence in the faculty position I ultimately accepted, hindsight tells me that it would have been easier to manage one major transition at a time.

Before accepting my current faculty position, I was an administrator who resided in the eastern portion of the United States—a region that was culturally familiar to me. Upon completing negotiations for my faculty position, I became a professor who resided in the Pacific Northwest portion of the United States—a region with a distinctly different culture and climate. Relocating to an unfamiliar area and adopting new job responsibilities was a task demanding enough to keep me busy, but my passion and support for the journal from my editorial team, advisory board, university, and publisher motivated me to continue investing significant amounts of time and energy in bringing it to fruition even as I adjusted to my new life.

The impetus for the journal—and my source of motivation to continue investing in it—was the frustration my colleagues and I experienced once we realized that existing journals had ceased to publish articles on the topics related to the field of higher education/student affairs and its graduate programs. Studying the evolution of the field of higher education/student affairs was a crucial area for research, particularly given the youth of the field, it is less than 125 years old (Freeman, Hagedorn, Goodchild, & Wright, 2014). In comparison, other disciplines such as math have been established for centuries. Adding to the need for such a journal, was my colleagues and I saw that top education journals were most interested in publishing material that addressed topics that were of interest to scholars from top higher education programs—programs with greater faculty numbers and resources than those available to the vast majority of higher education programs. Top programs in the field, of which there are approximately twenty nationwide, tend to have eight or more faculty per program; Whereas the average graduate program typically has 1-3 full-time faculty members. Novel ideas, particularly those that specifically addressed concerns of the field of higher education/student affairs and its programs seemed to be absent. Thus, the needs and concerns of some higher education/student affairs programs were underrepresented in academic literature.

Seeing a gap in the material that existing journals were willing to publish, I decided to start a new journal that would accept articles that addressed practices and program development in the field of higher education/student affairs and its graduate programs. From the beginning, I was aware that I would need advice from others with more career and journal experience, so I gathered together several mentors, with whom I had recently published a successful book, and asked for their input regarding appropriate first steps. Some of these mentors had previously been journal editors themselves; eventually, some of them also served in a more formal capacity as advisory board members for JSPTE.

The mentors recommended that before I committed myself to create a new journal, I should verify my assumption that there was a market for the journal I was thinking of creating; I needed to be sure that there was an interested audience beyond myself and my colleagues. In order to do that, I created and emailed surveys to each faculty member in a higher education graduate program within the United States—some eight hundred individuals—to determine the interest level in a journal of the type I had envisioned. I gathered this list of faculty from the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) graduate program directory. This was a feasibility study, of sorts. Then, when responses to the surveys showed that there was indeed a market and an audience for the journal I wanted to create, the real work began. I had to recruit others to help make the journal a reality.

Although some of my colleagues were not eager to participate in the day-to-day work of starting a new journal, particularly as they had previously been involved in journal work and they knew how much of a time commitment would be required, they did provide support and encouragement to me. From the beginning, I contributed ideas and energy; then some colleagues agreed to be actively involved, sharing expertise and complementary perspectives, and eventually, others joined in because their friends and colleagues were working on the journal.

We decided on the name of the journal by voting amongst the editorial and advisory board members. Suggestions were made by members of these two teams and a name was chosen that was inclusive of our potential international readership.

Several of the key individuals who helped found the journal were mentors to me, as well as top scholars in the field of higher education/student affairs. Their willingness to lend their credibility to me caused the journal to progress much faster than it might have otherwise. For example, while in a meeting at an ASHE conference, I remember the discussion turning toward moving forward with the development of doctoral program guidelines in higher education. A colleague and future peer mentor, an esteemed scholar in the field and a fellow African American, recommended my work to the others at the meeting, encouraging them to consider it in the discussion of doctoral program guidelines development. This moment was both personally and professionally significant to me; eventually, she wrote and collaborated with me, serving as the editor-in-chief (EIC). She now serves as JSPTE's Senior EIC. Several more well-known individuals in the field of higher education eventually joined the advisory board, lending their own credibility to the fledgling journal.

Once I had finished the feasibility study and recruited a team of experienced individuals to begin the journal with me, we had to decide how to publish it. Initially, we wanted to gain the sponsorship of a major conference and disciplinary society, which would have given the journal instant visibility and lent it credibility. However, the academic society we approached was not interested in publishing a new journal at the time; to complicate matters further, it had a for-profit, rather than mission-driven, orientation, necessitating a careful market, cost, and potential profits analysis. The journal we were attempting to establish was primarily mission-driven, which led us to focus far less on potential profit than that academic society—and many major publishers we subsequently approached—found necessary.

Since our goal was to disseminate information without creating a paywall, we decided that we needed to find a publisher with a similar mission in order to bring the project to life. We eventually decided to approach Informing Science Institute Press (ISI), an open-access publisher that was trying to move into the higher education market. Since I had worked with ISI before—I had published a well-received article in the *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, one of its journals—I already had a bit of built-in credibility in the publisher's eyes. I had also previously served as a reviewer for other journals, which enhanced my own confidence. Since ISI was interested in broadening its scope to include a journal that published articles in my field, and since its open-access structure seemed to be a good fit for the sort of journal I had envisioned, I moved into the phase of negotiations.

This was an interesting feat for me. At the time, I began negotiating with ISI, I was officially between institutions. Although the flux in my employment status could understandably be seen as a difficulty, I decided to use it as a point of leverage. Since I had no institutional limitations coming from above, I was better able to negotiate to achieve my own priorities for the journal. ISI was willing to cover upfront costs and help JSPTE begin essentially free of charge, which, coupled with its free access policies, sounded ideal. However, I was aware that a publisher's policies could change; as in the music industry, publishers may turn to manage copyrights in such a way as to maximize their own profits, leaving authors, like musical artists, with little credit for their efforts. In order to avoid potential copyright issues, I successfully negotiated for joint copyright for 3-5 years. This arrangement secured our access to everything we chose to publish, ensuring that if ISI decided to shift from its open-access policies, we would still be able to disseminate all of our articles free of charge since we still owned them.

Meanwhile, during my negotiations with my present institution, I presented the journal to the dean of the college at which I was interviewing for a faculty position. There were no articles yet, but we had a name, an editorial board and reviewers, and a publishing agreement; there was infrastructure in place—we had gone too far to retreat at that point. Consequently, I made it clear that if I accepted an offer from the institution, the journal would come with me. The dean, thankfully, had the foresight to provide initial resources for the journal, thus meeting one of my conditions for accepting an offer from my present institution.

Because the journal had not yet begun publishing, we did not yet have a true sense of what its costs would be. As we later learned, the largest costs associated with journals are those of labor, rather than printing and writing. Day-to-day operations, such as mailing journals, are time-consuming and best done with the assistance of a graduate student or administrative staff—assistants who must be paid for their labor. However, my institution, at least at that time, did not have a culture of graduate assistants working in capacities other than teaching; this made it more difficult for me to secure assistance for the journal. However, the institution did provide additional start-up funds that enabled me to hire administrative support as needed. The additional resources also enabled me to purchase office supplies and other items that the journal needed to get off the ground.

Nevertheless, my present institution provided an acceptable offer and agreed to sponsor the new journal. Although most journals are sponsored in one of three different ways—by a publishing house, by an institution, or independently—JSPTE utilized a hybrid arrangement, drawing its financial support from my institution and its infrastructure (online submission platforms, websites, formatting assistance, etc.) from the publisher. This was an ideal arrangement, as the institutional funding and the publisher's infrastructure allowed us to focus on the content and vision of our journal, rather than on raising money to start it and then laboriously finding and adjusting a platform so that we could operate. Although the journal is sponsored by my institution, the institution does not own it. Therefore, the journal enjoys support without being completely bound to the institution. If the senior EIC were for some reason unable to continue with the journal, my university would not appoint their replacement, the advisory and editorial board would work together to identify a replacement.

After the first issue of the journal was published and available in hard copy, I sought to promote the journal domestically and internationally by mailing copies to as many institutions offering graduate higher education programs as possible; we targeted 120 different institutions in the United States with graduate higher education programs. Forty additional higher education graduate programs and research centers were sent copies of the journal worldwide. This course of action was an expensive one; it cost us more to mail the journal to these locations than it did to print the journal. However, we believed we were justified in taking such a risk because members of our staff from outside North America had explained that scholars from other areas of the world tended to be skeptical of the credibility of open-access and online journals. In order to establish ourselves as credible to an international audience, we found it necessary to send physical copies of the journal. We wanted international scholars to distinguish the journal as "real" rather than a predatory journal.

Beyond the financial risks of such a course of action, I had no way of knowing how effective this means of promotion would be, or how soon other institutions would respond to it (if at all). As finances were limited, I found it necessary to raise the funds for postage myself. However, I ensured that this was not our only promotion strategy; the EIC and I also promoted the journal at ASHE and the American Education Research Association (AERA), purchasing booth space at the ASHE meeting and giving away free copies of the journal at both the ASHE and AERA conferences, along with other promotional materials to advertise the journal to our key demographic: faculty, students, and researchers who are affiliated with the field of higher education/student affairs and its graduate programs.

As I look toward the future, the goals for the journal are twofold: we (the editorial board) hope to establish the journal as one of the primary outlets for articles in the field of higher education/student affairs (both domestic and international) and we hope to publish articles primarily addressing topics related to higher education and student affairs and its graduate programs. Although we strayed slightly from this initially, as we were unable to predict the number of submissions we would receive, we hope to make the journal more visible to contributors who are interested in submitting articles that are aligned with the aim and mission of the journal.

Discussion

Victories and Accomplishments Along the Way

As I reflect back over the two and a half years that the JSPTE has officially been in existence, I am struck by the fact that we developed a full-fledged journal in so little time. Due to the support of my institution and the foresight of the dean with whom I originally negotiated, my institution made a strategic investment in the journal, helping it to progress much faster than it would have otherwise. I am truly amazed at how far we have come in so little time.

As I consider my relationships with associates of the journal, such as peer reviewers, I am grateful that I had previous experience as a managing editor and in performing peer review myself. My involvement as a reviewer in two other leading international journals, supplemented by my position of senior EIC of JSPTE, gave me the credibility I needed to deal effectively with others in my field, especially when my journal had no established publication record. Although I have not faced challenges to my credibility, I know that, if they presented themselves, I could successfully and confidently face them due to my previous experiences and academic alliances.

Disappointments, Struggles, and Failures Along the Way

Although I am pleased that the JSPTE is in a healthy place today, I would be remised in my account of its inception to omit the struggles we experienced while establishing it. Indeed, one of the struggles I have experienced is reflected almost unconsciously in my narrative; I have given myself away by vacillating between “I” and “we,” considering the journal “mine” and thinking of it as “ours.” While it is true that I along with the EIC (that individual is now the Senior EIC) performed most of the “legwork” in establishing the journal, and while I consider it “my baby,” my earnest desire is for it to outlive me. In the future, I would like to focus less on day-to-day operations the journal and more on making sure that others around me are an important part of the journal. This process will include sharing the benefits of the journal with locals (such as those in my college and department), ensuring that they understand how the journal can benefit them, as well. In order for those nearest me to contribute meaningfully to the journal, they must see it not as an extension of me (in which case opinions of the journal will fluctuate as mercurially as will others’ opinions of me as a person), but rather as an entity of its very own, an entity with the wherewithal to advance the field of higher education/student affairs.

Another challenge I have weathered is the shifting of power dynamics within my institution. When I first joined my institution, I worked closely with the dean of my college to advance the journal. However, the dean unexpectedly retired a year after I arrived. After her retirement, the journal came to be managed at the departmental level, where resources are more limited. While the journal was initially intended to complement an emerging graduate program in higher education administration, this program did not materialize as we had planned. Other institutional changes in expectations for on-campus units have made it necessary for me to raise funds for the journal, as my institution prefers most on-campus units to be self-supporting (although it is acknowledged that new journals will not initially be financially independent).

Yet another challenge I have faced in establishing the journal is the challenge of managing communication and communication-style preferences. It is important to be adaptable and to find various ways to communicate effectively with the various stakeholders. Misunderstandings can ensue if one does not take care to communicate clearly and transparently. It is also important to be self-aware and to have a clear understanding of the commitment level of one's team members. Team members who are involved for reasons other than the love of the work may pull back when the work becomes unpleasant. Some of my colleagues, particularly those on the advisory board, have expressed that they remain because they want to prepare the next generation of leaders; others may stay because they believe I am moving in a positive direction and they want to follow. Still, others may be involved for reasons beyond these. Thus, I need to be attentive to the dynamics of the strong and weak ties around me; my colleagues will respond differently to the challenges of the journal depending on their motivations for involvement.

Finally, while it is necessary to understand the motivations of colleagues and advisors working on a new journal, it is possible to lean too heavily on colleagues with strong ties, as I learned from my early experiences in establishing JSPTE. Due to major changes in my professional and personal lives, I found myself relying heavily on my EIC as the journal began though, to her credit, she was both understanding and helpful.

Recommendations to Others

Seek related experience before beginning a journal. For those interested in beginning a new academic journal my first piece of advice is do not jump into it immediately. For most individuals, a lack of credibility will be as serious an issue as well as being (inevitably) overwhelmed. Even though I had previous experience as a managing editor and a peer reviewer, and even though I had a team of top scholars who lent me their credibility and advice, I was still overwhelmed at the prospect of pulling each aspect of a new journal into place. Beginning a journal is an undertaking that requires a leader with a certain amount of standing in the field in question, as well as stamina, time, energy, and knowledgeable advisors. Previous journal experience is also key to success; an individual without experience, particularly in the areas of managing or associate editor, will most likely struggle with a sudden jump to the position of senior EIC. Those interested in establishing/founding a new journal should, therefore, gain experience in working with existing journals, both for the purpose of developing credibility and for the purpose of gaining a personal understanding of the way that journals operate.

Be clear about your own motives for beginning a journal. While prestige is a real aspect of starting a new journal, it is not, ultimately, a motivator sufficient to carry a journal forward in the long term. A lack of dedication will cause anyone to give up in the face of adversity, stress, crowded schedules, mental strain, and a lack of sleep—all familiar problems to those who undertake the founding of a journal. The individual primarily responsible for the journal's success, therefore, must be motivated by a firm commitment to the journal's mission, particularly as that individual must also be the journal's advocate, apologist, and cheerleader.

Seek to make the journal about more than yourself. Although journals may be established primarily by the efforts of one individual, they are about so much more than one individual. I would never have been successful in my efforts to establish the JSPTE without an entire team to assist and advise me. Consequently, I would recommend that those interested in starting new journals boldly recruit others who are smarter, more gifted, or skilled in other areas—having a variety of skill sets to draw on can only help the journal over time. Advisors can offer their credibility and scholarly experience; colleagues can offer fresh perspectives and healthy debate; administrative staff can relieve pressure by performing day-to-day tasks. I would also recommend finding a good publisher who is willing to act as a mentor. With a bit of humility, one can learn a great deal. Humility is also quite helpful from an interpersonal perspective, as others may be more apt to contribute when they sense that their contributions are valued.

I would also recommend that those interested in establishing new journals reach out early on to colleagues, explaining the mission of the journal and marketing it in such a way that colleagues understand how it can benefit them, as well. In my case, although I would have described the JSPTE as being housed in my college, I discovered that my colleagues perceived it as mine. Indeed, it was intended to complement my institution's developing higher education administration program. In order to further the journal and strengthen relationships within my college, I continue to work to demonstrate to my colleagues that the journal is not merely mine, but also a vital part of the college in which it is housed. Ways to accomplish this include but are not limited to letting colleagues know of opportunities to contribute to the journal through service as reviewers, editorial and/or advisory board members, and making them aware of the journal's calls for papers or of opportunities to edit special issues for the journal.

Be realistic and count costs. Who will be financially responsible for the new journal? How much assistance will be required? What sort of assistance is available, and how much will it cost? All of these questions demand definitive answers. It is far easier to advocate for a new journal when one has numerical answers to the sorts of questions publishers and sponsors must ask. Even non-profit journals, such as the JSPTE, must be able to articulate their needs and justify their value—if not in profit, then in terms of prestige and indirect financial benefits to the sponsor such as increased enrollment, research partnerships, or grant activity.

In addition to financial costs, there are significant personal costs involved in beginning a journal. As mentioned earlier, a new journal is much like a new baby—exciting, full of potential, and in need of an enormous investment of time. Although I began a journal while negotiating career changes and a move across the country, I would not recommend a similar timing to others. Rather, I would suggest that individuals interested in beginning a new journal assess their own schedules and energy levels carefully, considering both professional and personal obligations before committing to a project that will consume massive amounts of time and energy. Accounting for other obligations can also help a senior EIC who has decided to proceed with a new journal make informed administrative decisions, such as determining publication frequency, author access policies, and medium (online only or both print and online.)

Find and maintain a supportive team. Team members will come and go, requiring flexibility and a quick response, but ultimately a journal is only as strong as the team supporting it. As I discovered while moving across the country and establishing myself in a new institution, there were times when I was unable to focus as much on the journal as I would have liked. During those times, my EIC cheerfully did what was necessary to process articles and keep the journal moving forward. She is a scholar of standing in her field and is an individual dedicated to the success of the journal because she believes in its mission. Having team members such as these are vital to the success of any scholarly journal.

A maximally effective team should include individuals from the senior EIC's home institution, as well as a professional copy editor and a mixture of journal veterans and junior/senior scholars from the field. As I reflect on the way we established JSPTE's advisory and editorial boards, I regret not incorporating individuals from my own institution. If I had done so, I could have established the JSPTE as a journal affiliated with my entire department and promoted it as a strength of my institution, rather than it being perceived as an interesting project that advances my field and my career without significantly affecting my colleagues. While my current team is supportive and strong, it would be stronger with the assistance of those nearest me; individuals from my own institution can effectively advocate for institutional resource allocation both financial and otherwise to the journal.

However, gathering an effective, dedicated team is insufficient to the success of the journal. Journal founders must work to preserve optimal relationships with each member of the team by communicating effectively with everyone involved (including the publisher, who is likely a repository of helpful information and apt to troubleshoot various issues.) One crucial way to accomplish this is simply to ensure that all team members, especially all individuals on the advisory and editorial boards are kept abreast of the journal's business via periodical reports and meetings, either in person or via synchronous communication technology such as Skype, Zoom, telephone calls, etc. Personally, I find it effective to hold board meetings at the disciplinary conference for our field—a conference most/all members would already attend. Another crucial way to accomplish this is to demonstrate appreciation publicly, acknowledging the contributions of others on the team. Explicitly crediting team members communicates to your staff that they are valued and, perhaps, that they are not working under the direction of someone who is narcissistic. And, difficult as it may be, it is worthwhile to be open and frank with team members who are not doing their work. Being willing to remove underperforming individuals gives a senior EIC freedom to replace them with others who are both dedicated and competent, ultimately propelling the journal forward. JSPTE utilizes three-year terms limits, which can facilitate this process.

Be a student of the journal process. In both the planning and execution phases of beginning a new academic journal, it is vital for new editors to learn as much as possible about what they intend to do. One way that I accomplished this, early in the process of establishing JSPTE was to look for resources related to developing different types of journals. Eventually, I discovered a listserv associated with Scholastica, an open-access journal support platform. Scholastica allows journal editors to speak to one another via an online forum, which makes it possible for them to learn from one another. After the journal was firmly established, I also made a point of staying current on top journal trends by finding educational online resources such as the webinars offered by Scholastica (see Scholastica, N. D.).

Be visionary. In the planning phase of creating a new journal, it is important for a founding journal editor to structure it in a way that harmonizes with the journal's overall mission. For JSPTE, my goal was primarily to ensure that scholarly literature regarding higher education/student affairs programs was available to as wide an academic audience as possible. Therefore, I eschewed publication methods that would create a paywall for readers, opting instead for an open-access model. Of the open-access models available, including gold access (which allows readers to access content free of charge, but requires authors to pay publication fees), green access (which makes older archived content freely available to readers but requires a subscription for full access to new articles (Elsevier, 2017), and institutional membership (which allows a sponsoring institution to absorb publication costs, giving free access to readers and free publication to authors (Open Access Information Scholarly Information Sourcebook, N. D.). The model best supporting my journal's mission was that of institutional membership, which encourages submissions as it removes financial barriers for authors.

Other mission-influenced decisions to be made include what acceptance and rejection rates should be, whether or not manuscript acceptance will be year-round or based on certain dates, and what the publication medium should be. As JSPTE was in its infancy, it was difficult for us to reject articles when we received relatively few, despite the fact that higher rejection rates imply higher standards of quality for a journal. Additionally, our mission was to disseminate as much high quality higher education content as possible. The more submissions we accepted and published, the more information we could share with the field. Thus, we settled on ongoing article acceptance, which allows authors to submit their work at any time. Each submission is considered solely upon its own merits, as opposed to models requiring authors to submit work by a deadline and editorial staff to select and publish a number of articles from the body of submissions. Although, admittedly, comparing and choosing articles after a deadline is much easier from an editor's point of view, as this work can be scheduled conveniently. A rolling (yearly ongoing) acceptance model may result in higher acceptance rates, giving the journal a less prestigious image, but it democratically allows a greater quantity of rigorous, appropriately focused work to be published and to enrich the field. And, to ensure that our journal appealed to as wide an audience as possible, we opted to publish both online and in print, allowing for both ease of access and the international credibility that a physical journal copy provides.

Structural decisions such as these are, of course, necessary for every journal, and best made with deep consideration of the journal's vision and the ways that its structured will help to accomplish that vision. Yet while it is vital for new journal senior EICs to attend to the structure and day-to-day operations of their journals, focusing merely on the present or on day-to-day concerns is insufficient. Pressures will arise from various constituencies, who will challenge the mission of the journal; the senior EIC, as the journal's living logo, is the individual responsible for understanding, articulating, defending, and maintaining the journal's mission and vision for the future. Without a strategic plan, senior EICs may succumb to the distractions of the moment, losing focus on the ultimate purpose of the journal.

Planning the journal's issue schedule at least a year in advance, which entails having an idea of how many articles will be accepted and what the issue rotation might be, is a helpful tactic that provides direction and, perhaps, relieves some of the stress of uncertainty. Journal editors would also be well advised to plan for their journals' organizational future five to ten years in advance. In the case of JSPTE, my institution was not responsible for succession planning; this was a task I had to complete. For new journal editors, I would recommend establishing a succession plan from the inception of the journal, then training other staff to take over editorial responsibilities. This would provide support in the short term while allowing staff members to develop skills and experience that would prepare them to serve as the senior EIC of the journal if elected in the future or provide them with the transferable skills to start their own journals or serve as editors of other journals in the long term.

Remember to negotiate for the "small things." Seemingly granular issues, such as securing the assistance of a graduate student, can have disproportionate effects on the workload and well-being of a new senior EIC. Therefore, in order to optimize working conditions and prevent burnout, it is important for editors to ask for the "small things" that they need. Having dedicated office space for the journal is enormously helpful, in that having separate locations for journal work and faculty responsibilities encourages a healthy separation of tasks; employing a graduate student to manage day-to-day journal responsibilities allows senior EICs to focus on the issues of greatest importance, rather than on potentially frustrating or overwhelming details; having a travel budget for conferences and opportunities to promote the journal, as well as a budget for tokens of appreciation for staff and supporters of the journal, relieves financial pressures. Relatively minor concerns such as these are worth negotiating, especially as the resources to be gained from such negotiation can result in a drastic reduction of stress.

Additionally, although this issue may be more difficult to negotiate than others, it is important for journal editors who also serve as faculty to determine how their service as editors is counted toward the promotion and tenure processes. Perhaps a course release will be available, or perhaps serving as a journal's senior EIC will be an acceptable substitute for other service and outreach activities; it is impossible to know until one has inquired. However, once the value of this activity is established, a written record of the agreement is indispensable in the event of leadership shifts or other institutional changes.

Market the journal strategically and unceasingly. There are myriads of ways to promote a journal, but effective journal marketing requires an understanding of what the journal's public image should be. It is important to determine the target authors for article submissions—some journals publish graduate student and junior faculty work, while others are oriented toward the contributions of senior faculty and more experienced researchers. Once target contributors have been identified, senior EICs can then promote their journals accordingly via disciplinary listservs and academic and professional associations. Visibility is crucial to achieving and maintaining a steady stream of new articles otherwise, submissions may come as "feast or famine." However, to attract publishable submissions, the editor must determine and effectively convey the desired image of the journal. Yet regardless of the journal's image and orientation toward junior or senior faculty publications, it is undeniably helpful to build credibility by securing submissions from well-respected members of the field early in the lifetime of the journal. This can be accomplished by inviting such individuals to contribute to a special issue.

Recognize that "the buck stops with you." Senior EICs, in addition to being the living logos of their journals, are also the ones ultimately responsible for everything that their journals do and everything that they publish. This responsibility requires significant effort. While an editor is, of course, not expected to provide peer feedback, as does the review board members; to provide a thorough content evaluation for submissions, as does the editorial board; to proofread, as does the copyeditor; or to act as a member of the advisory board, the editor is ultimately accountable for mistakes made by others in these roles. Thus, it is crucial for a new editor to understand how to perform the roles of all other team members. And, of course, it is just as crucial for new editors to perform their own duties thoroughly and consistently in order to keep journal processes running smoothly. Reviewers, for example, become rightfully frustrated when editors pass along unread articles that are clearly unprepared for publication.

Celebrate the small wins. It may be possible to begin a journal with little excitement or fanfare. However, I would argue that it is not possible to maintain it without recognizing, appreciating, and celebrating successes when they come. Celebration is a vital part of maintaining organizational morale, which gives individuals the strength to continue and the motivation to achieve more. However, a celebration will be meaningless unless success is defined from the beginning of the establishment of the journal and articulated to everyone associated with the journal, including the publisher and the institutional sponsor.

Within JSPTE, there is a healthy tension between those who strive for elite journal status and those who focus on maximum information dissemination; this tension helps us to balance our goals. However, we are all unified in our focus on increasing the visibility and credibility of our journal. We can all celebrate victories such as being listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ, 2017) and Cabells International Journal Directory (Cabells, 2014), for instance, because we see how this further establishes the journal and makes our publications more visible and accessible. Although we all know that such victories are only small steps toward becoming a premier journal in our field—which requires time and, usually, a strong relationship with a disciplinary organization—we are also aware that charting our progress ultimately inspires us to make more progress.

Conclusion

Beginning a new academic journal is a serious undertaking, demanding vast amounts of time, energy, financial resources, and scholarly support. This is not a project suitable for individuals merely seeking to add to their Curriculum Vitae or their levels of prestige. Rather, it is a project best accomplished by a scholar with established credibility in the journal's field and—most importantly—a sincere desire to advance the field.

Most faculty members and academics need not begin journals, and most should not. Establishing a journal is hard, tiring work that demands attention faculty members might otherwise spend improving their teaching or conducting new research. It requires a certain amount of business skill, both in administration and in marketing. It necessitates interaction and negotiation with many other people, some of whom may have conflicting goals. But for mature scholars who have previous journal experience, a passion to fill a gap in the coverage of existing journals, and the ability to gather a team of experts dedicated to filling that gap by means of creating a journal, it is a worthwhile endeavor. Though to date, there has been little scholarly literature explaining how to begin a journal, this narrative has been presented as an example to show some of the difficulties and rewards of doing so. For those properly prepared, qualified, and motivated, I am convinced that the rewards outweigh the difficulties.

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