

Lessons Learned: Reflecting on Our First Three Years as Editors of *EJRSME*

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Three years have passed since we assumed the role of Editors for the *Electronic Journal for Research in Science & Mathematics Education (EJRSME)*. Seeing as we are now publishing our twelfth issue, we want to take a moment to look back on where we came from, what we have accomplished in the last three years, and what lessons we have learned about the world of publishing an academic journal.

A Brief History of *EJSE* and *EJRSME*

The first issue of the *Electronic Journal of Science Education (EJSE)* was published in 1996 and, in so doing, claimed the title of the first ever journal of science education research published entirely electronically. In addition, *EJSE* was also open access and free for authors and readers. Because of the online nature of the journal, it welcomed hyperlinks to databases, photographs, videos, and other media as well. *EJSE* was the brainchild of Dr. John Cannon who published *EJSE* with the help of Dr. David Crowther (both from the University of Nevada at Reno) from 1996 to 2007.

In 2007, Dr. Michael Kamen of Southwestern University assumed editorship. During this time, with the help of Associate Editor Dr. Molly Weinburgh of Texas Christian University, Dr Kamen made a concerted effort to increase contributions from international science education colleagues. Indeed, the last analysis of *EJSE* downloads (conducted in 2013) revealed that over a 32-month period, the journal received on average 2,185 site visits per month, from 179 countries. Over half of the site visits were from outside the U.S.

In 2011, Dr. Weinburgh took over the editorship of *EJSE*. During this time, *EJSE* was indexed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) as well as EBSCO and later, in 2017, *EJSE* was added to the ERIC database. In 2019, Dr. Weinburgh and Dr. Kamen proposed the idea of *EJSE* becoming the flagship journal of the International Consortium for Research in Science & Mathematics Education (ICRSME) and that we assume the editorship. After serious consideration, we agreed and, the rest, as they say, is history.

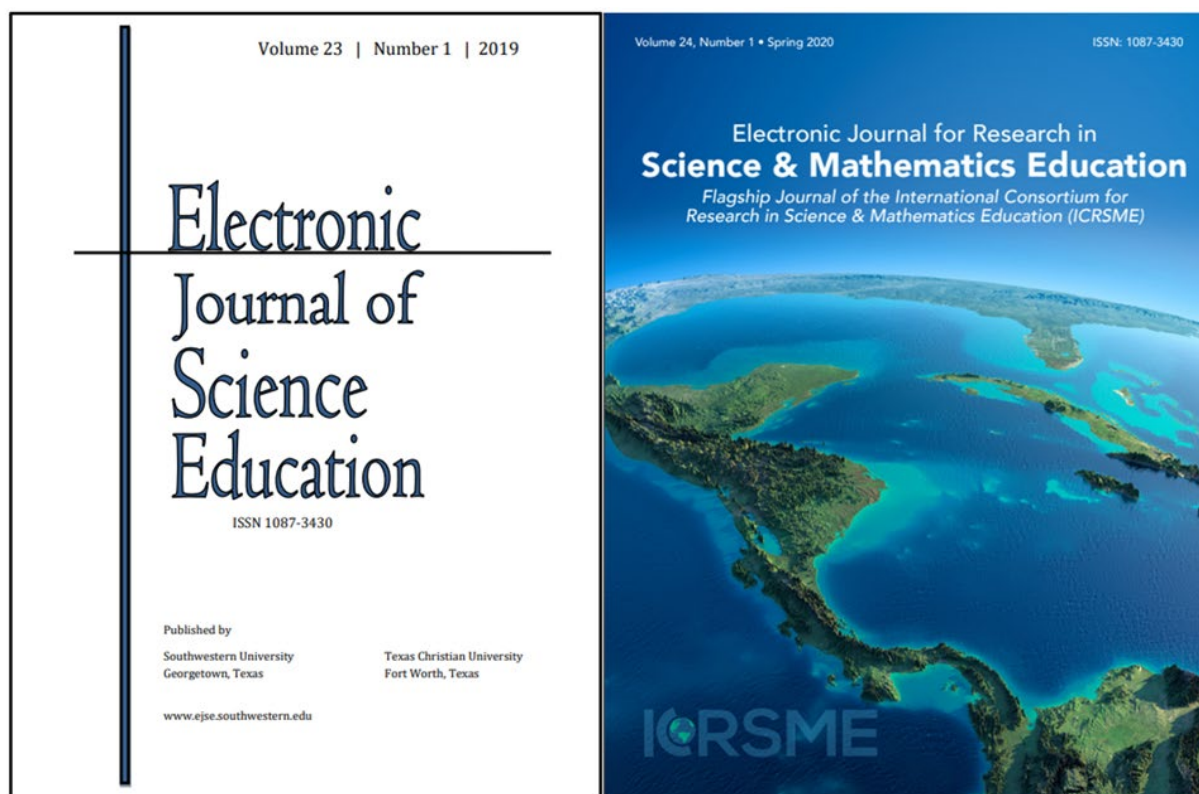
Changes to *EJSE* Since Assuming Editorship

The first change that occurred upon transitioning into the editorship was a change in journal scope and title. *EJSE* is now the *Electronic Journal for Research in Science & Mathematics Education (EJRSME)* to match the mission and goals of ICRSME. The scope of the journal expanded to include mathematics and mathematics education articles alongside the corresponding science-focused articles. As we were in the midst of rebranding ICRSME, the journal appearance was impacted. Figure 1 shows the change in cover from *EJSE* to *EJRSME*. The new cover was designed by Dr. Dusty Crocker at Texas Christian University.

In addition to the new look of the journal, we also decided to publish four issues of *EJRSME* each year (spring, summer, fall, and winter) for consistency. Two of the issues have been special issues. The [first special issue](#) was published in Fall 2020 and focused on how science and mathematics educators shifted their teaching to adjust to restrictions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While many journals have published articles describing such pedagogical shifts, *EJRSME* acted quite nimbly and had the special issue out by the first week in October, just several months after schools went fully remote in the U.S. Interestingly, this special issue includes some of the most accessed and cited articles in our three-year term. Our [second special issue](#) focused on the [Sinai and Synapses Fellowship](#), in which Mark participated. This issue described numerous ways that science educators (formal and informal) addressed the intersection of science and religion and how they endeavored to elevate the discourse between scientifically and religiously minded individuals. We will soon be publishing our third special issue on Critical Rhetorics in Science and Mathematics Education.

Figure 1

EJSE Cover (2019) and EJRSME Cover (2020)



Through these experiences over the past three years, we have learned a great deal about the world of academic publishing. Once we saw all of the steps of the publication process from the vantage point of Editors, we fully understood why it can seem to take so much time. More importantly, we realized just how many people were involved - people who generously give of their time and expertise in the mission of advancing scholarship in science and mathematics education research and in helping each and every one of us in our own mission of academic advancement, tenure, or promotion. In other words, the *we* in the opening paragraph represents a community of volunteers contributing to the various phases in the publication of an issue.

Publication Process

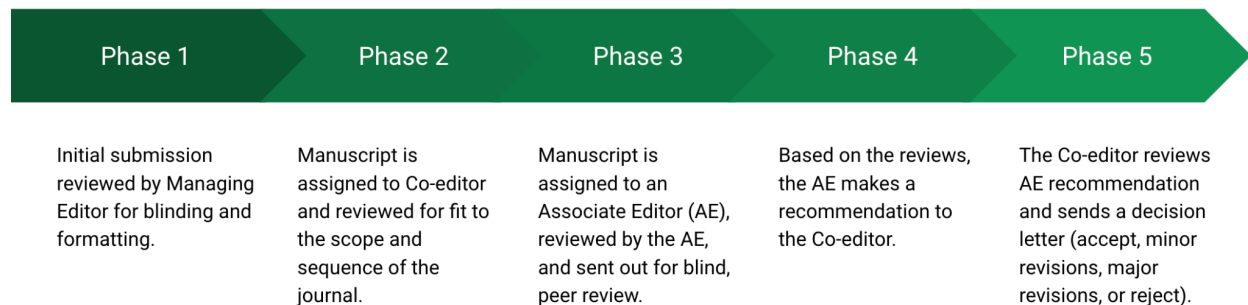
The publication process from initial submission through final decision and publication if a manuscript is accepted involves multiple phases (Figure 2). In the first phase, the Managing Editor of the journal reviews the newly submitted manuscript for blinding and formatting. If the manuscript needs to be blinded further or formatted to meet the journal guidelines, it is returned to the author(s) for these initial revisions. When the manuscript is fully blinded and appropriately formatted, the Managing Editor assigns the manuscript to one of the Co-editors. In Phase 2, the Co-editor reviews the manuscript for fit to the scope and sequence of the journal:

EJRSME publishes manuscripts relating to issues in science/mathematics education and science/mathematics teacher education from early childhood through the university level including informal science and environmental education. *EJRSME* reviews original science and mathematics education manuscripts that report meaningful research, present research methodology, develop theory, and explore new perspectives and teaching strategies.

If the manuscript falls within the scope of the journal with respect to both substance and structure, the Co-editor assigns the manuscript to an Associate Editor (AE).

Figure 2

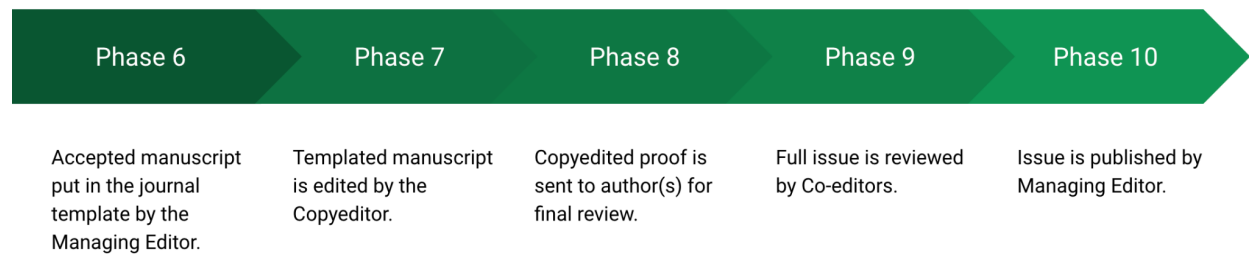
First Five Phases of the Publication Process



The peer-review process is initiated in Phase 3. The AE reviews the manuscript and then sends it out for blind, peer review to two reviewers. The AE may need to send out multiple invitations to secure two reviewers for a manuscript. Phase 4 commences when all of the reviews are submitted. The AE examines the reviewers' feedback and makes a recommendation to the Co-editor, synthesizing the assessment of the manuscript. In Phase 5, the Co-editor sends a decision letter based on the AE recommendation and reviews. The four possible decisions are:

- The manuscript is rejected.
- The manuscript requires major revisions. When the manuscript is resubmitted, it returns to Phase 3. If possible, the manuscript is sent out to the reviewers assigned to the original manuscript.
- The manuscript requires minor revisions. When the manuscript is resubmitted, it returns to Phase 4 and is reviewed by the AE.
- The manuscript is accepted.

When a manuscript is accepted, it proceeds to the copyediting stage (Figure 3).

Figure 3*Five Phases of Copyediting Stage*

The Managing Editor moves each accepted manuscript through the copyediting stage. First, the Managing Editor formats the article in the journal template (Phase 6) and sends the templated manuscript to the Copyeditor. In Phase 7, the Copyeditor completes a thorough edit of the manuscript with respect to grammar, general formatting, and alignment with APA 7. The copyedited proof is then sent to the author(s) for review (Phase 8); the full issue is also reviewed by the Co-editors (Phase 9). Finally, in Phase 10, the Managing Editor uploads the issue for publication.

Valuing Volunteers

Volunteers are involved at every phase of the publication process, including the Co-editors, AEs, reviewers, and Copyeditor. In other words, the journal would not function without the dedicated service of its volunteers. Further, since COVID-19, journals are experiencing challenges in securing peer reviewers for articles, which has resulted in delays in the publication process (Flaherty, 2022). We would, therefore, like to express our gratitude to all of the volunteers, who have helped *EJRSME* thrive over the past three years. Thank you all for your service.

Managing Editors

Jonathan Crocker, *Texas Christian University* (2020 - 2021)
Morgan Jansing, *Texas Christian University* (2021 - present)

Copyeditor

Audrey Meador, *West Texas A&M University*

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If you are interested in becoming a part of the *EJRSME* community, let us know via the volunteer forms for [reviewers](#) or [Associate Editors](#).

Reference

Flaherty, C. (2022, June 13). The peer-review crisis. *Inside Higher Ed*.
<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2022/06/13/peer-review-crisis-creates-problems-journals-and-scholars>