V. The Transition: Starting a New Editorial Office

Editors-elect should begin planning for the editorial transition immediately upon their appointment. However, under no circumstances may editors-elect set up an editorial office more than six months before the start of their official term of service (January 1). Editors-elect should take full advantage of the prestige associated with their publication when negotiating with their institutions for potential contributions-in-kind of office space, equipment, clerical assistance, and other needed supplies and facilities. And this is the time, of course, to make all financial arrangements for your publication with your department and your institution (see Section IV above).

During the first six months a new editorial office is in operation, both the outgoing and incoming editorial offices are functioning at varying levels. This overlap provides for a “gentle” transition period for both offices, allowing a gradual phasing in and phasing out of editorial activities. Editorial responsibilities during this transition time should be negotiated between the outgoing editor and the editor-elect.

The start-up costs for the new office will have been estimated by the outgoing editorial office in its transition-year budget, submitted during the fall prior to the appointment of the new editor. At the time of appointment, the incoming editor will be contacted by the Executive Office and given an opportunity to discuss and submit modest revisions to the estimated budget.

A. MISSION STATEMENT FOR THE PUBLICATION

The editor-elect may choose to modify the publication’s “mission statement.” (See Appendix G for journal mission statements.) If the editor-elect’s statement represents a significant modification, it must be approved by the Committee on Publications prior to the transition of editorial offices. The approved mission statement and notice of the editorial transition will be published in Footnotes and on the ASA website in advance of the new editor’s term; the editor-elect may request space from the outgoing editor or from editors of other ASA publications.

B. MANUSCRIPT REDIRECTION DATES

After an editor-elect has been selected, the outgoing editor should contact the editor-elect, and between them they should decide on the date when authors should send their manuscripts to the new editor. The outgoing editor must inform the ASA Director of Publications and publish this redirection date in appropriate issues of the publication. The redirection date and new editorial office address will appear in Footnotes and on the ASA website.

In addition, the two editors should decide on a redirection date for manuscripts that are in revision, as there are additional considerations with these (see Section II.D). This date is generally later than the redirection date for new manuscripts. They should also negotiate the number of accepted manuscripts the outgoing editor will pass on to the editor-elect for the first issue or two of the new editorship.
C. SUPPORT STAFF

Editors of journals with fewer manuscript submissions may be able to use employees available at their institution through their departments; journals with more substantial submission numbers will need to recruit one or more employees. When the editorial office first opens, the need for office assistance may be greater or less than it will be when the office is fully operational, depending on the roles the editors and other employees are filling. A new or prospective employee should understand that the hours worked per week might fluctuate, depending on the smoothness with which the journal responsibilities are transferred (also see Section II.J).

An editor’s institution can provide information regarding hiring policies and salary levels, but Executive Office standards must be maintained.

There are two ways to pay support staff:

1. Through the Institution. When an editor hires an employee through his or her institution, the institution handles pay scales and raises, withholding taxes, fringe benefits, and so on. ASA prefers this method of hiring, especially if an editor’s general office expenses are also managed through the institution through a grant from ASA. In this case, ASA issues a nominal advance of funds to the institution at the beginning of an editorial term to ensure that the institution does not suffer negative financial consequences. Institutions are then expected to submit timely (monthly is preferred) statements of expenses for reimbursement so that the advance is maintained throughout the editorial term. At the end of the editorial term, the editor is responsible for ensuring the advance is returned to ASA, less any final expenses related to the editorial office.

2. Independent Contractors. If an editor’s home institution is unwilling or unable to allow the hiring of an editorial staff person as an institution employee, the editor may hire an independent contractor and pay him or her a fixed hourly rate. Invoices from the independent contractor should be approved by the editor and forwarded to the ASA for payment. Independent contractors are not eligible for benefits (e.g., health insurance, sick or vacation leave, disability insurance), and ASA cannot withhold taxes on their behalf.

Some editorial offices (particularly those with no full-time employees eligible for benefits) may elect to maintain a checking account (with an advance from ASA). This account can be used to directly pay independent contractors and other office expenses. In this instance, the editor must send prompt monthly reimbursement requests to ASA so that the editorial office expenses do not exceed the money advanced.

D. OFFICE SPACE

If an editor’s own office is too small to accommodate journal files and clerical staff, the editor’s institution usually can provide additional office space. However, it should be made clear to the institution that the Association will not pay overhead charges for editorial office space.
E. OFFICE EQUIPMENT

Upon approval by the Executive Office, the editor may purchase the office equipment he or she needs for the efficient operation of the editorial office or may rent such equipment from an institution or another supplier. All equipment purchases or rentals must be pre-approved by the Executive Office. Receipts for equipment purchased should be sent to the Executive Office as part of the monthly expense statement. As stated earlier, ASA retains title to all equipment purchased with editorial office funds or other publications-related funds.

F. STATIONERY AND OFFICE SUPPLIES

The incoming editor may purchase office supplies as needed to manage the manuscript review process. While rarely needed with the submission and review process managed online, if used, letterhead stationery must include the name of the Association, the name of the publication, and the editor’s name, institution’s address, e-mail address, telephone number, and fax number. The editor may also want to include the names of deputy editors, the managing editor, or other key office employees.

Office supplies should be ordered early on so that needed materials are on hand when the office gets up and running. Important items should be inventoried and reordered when supplies become low. Many universities have set up internal systems for ordering office supplies at low prices; editors should check with their department on this. Appendix H shows a sample list of inventoried office supplies.

In addition to the directories and guides supplied by ASA, two reference sources will be important to the functioning of the editorial office: (1) *The Chicago Manual of Style*, published by the University of Chicago Press, and (2) *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, either online or hardcover. These two references will help guide the editor and the managing editor in making spelling, usage, and style decisions not covered by the *ASA Style Guide*. Purchasing these early in the editorial term will help greatly to answer many questions.

G. POSTAGE

Aside from *Contemporary Sociology*, which mails books out for review, editorial offices usually have minor postage expenses. Postage expenses during the transition months will have been budgeted for by the outgoing editor.

Base postage estimates on the current rates for U.S. first-class mail and add an adjustment, if necessary, for sending items via airmail to foreign countries.

H. TELEPHONE/FAX

Editors with an editorial office at an institution may arrange for a phone extension to be installed so that editorial-related telephone expenses can be billed to ASA if necessary. However, editors should also explore the willingness of their institutions to absorb all or a
portion of the office telephone expenses, particularly as most editorial correspondence is managed through e-mail or the online submission and review system.

I. MANUSCRIPT FILES

The editor and editor-elect should jointly decide which manuscript files should be transferred to the new office and the date of transfer. Generally, all manuscripts currently in review are sent to the editor-elect along with selected manuscripts that are being revised by their authors. The outgoing editor is responsible for “cleaning up” all matters pertaining to her or his editorship and clarifying the status of all manuscripts in the files.

The Publications Committee has suggested that manuscript files that have completed the review process be retained for a minimum of three years (and transferred to the incoming editor). There will be occasions when the editor-elect may want to refer to these files, such as if he or she suspects that a submission could be a reworked version of a previously rejected manuscript. Almost all manuscript files are now maintained online in the review and submission system, but hard copies of manuscripts that are not available online should not be destroyed. Contact the ASA office if you have manuscript files older than three years; arrangements will be made for shipment and storage.

Files on manuscripts that authors have been asked to revise and resubmit should be kept by the outgoing editor until an agreed-upon date so that editorial decisions on revisions can be made as much as possible by the outgoing editor. This transfer date is generally somewhat later than the date for transfer of manuscripts currently in review to allow the outgoing editor and authors revising papers enough time to negotiate any decisions on manuscripts that are close to being ready for publication.

J. SOFTWARE AND MANUSCRIPT TRACKING SYSTEMS

New editorial offices will need word processing and spreadsheet software, e-mail software, and Internet access. Adobe Acrobat is also useful to create PDF files. Some editors may also find that basic accounting software (such as Quicken) can help with budgeting and tracking office expenses, although these tasks can usually be handled by the institution’s accounting system.

ASA’s publishing partners offer access to ScholarOne’s Manuscripts free of charge and ASA requires editors to use the web-based program for tracking manuscripts and sending manuscripts out for review. (See Appendix I for a copy of the User’s Manual.)

K. PUBLICATIONS OFFICE WEB SITES

The American Sociological Association web site displays information about all Association publications. Editors may choose extra information to display on the individual journal webpages or on the journal’s webpage on the publishing partner’s website. ASA typically discourages journal webpages maintained outside of the ASA and publisher web sites.