

## How to Start a Science Journal

**I** was asked in several different occasions by friends to tell them what one should do to establish a research journal. Here I have decided to put together my responses, not claiming that the following content has even a marginal right to be called a comprehensive guide to establishing a journal editorial. First of all, if you are thinking of establishing a new journal in chemistry, physics and biology, stop it, unless you are doing that while working for the established publishing groups like Willey, Elsevier, ACS, APS etc, assuming they decided to open a new journal to conform the ever-evolving needs of the scientific community. In any other case, there is absolutely no way a chemist, biologist or physicist will publish his/her credible research in your journal, since there are so many journals and publishers with proper reputation out there for nearly a century or more. However, we should admit that the publishing habits are not as standardized and established in other disciplines. This issue is especially relevant for engineering and social sciences. Hence, for these areas, new journals might actually have a chance to become accepted and can even change the publishing ethics of the corresponding area.



**F**or starting a research periodical, the most important thing in general would be to become closely familiar with the usual constituents and workflow of such organisations. The best way would be to directly examine the respected journals in your area and, even better, to submit an article there so that you see how the refereeing process goes and how the editorial board does the communication handling. Much of this information is also available from the journal web pages, thus thoroughly examining them would be the best way to start. If in doubt which journals are considered the best in your area, look that up from the “ISI Web of Knowledge” that holds the Thomson Scientific database of journal impact factors. Otherwise, look for the journals that belong to the well-established publishing groups such as Willey, Elsevier, Springer, Royal Society of X, American Society of Y etc.

**A**fter one starts a journal, the most difficult part begins, that is to make people literally sacrifice their research in a periodical with practically zero impact factor. The way it works for the beginning is that the editorial writes a nice “Call for Papers” advertisement, where the birth of the journal, its scope and the submission criteria are explained in the most appealing manner, and sends out to different professionals in the area. A better way could be to individually invite people to submit a manuscript. Taking part in the key conferences that the researchers of your area attend to might be a good way to advertise the journal and send follow-up invitations for manuscript submissions. I personally get plenty of such e-mails, which I almost immediately delete, but that is because I am from one of the areas mentioned in the first paragraph.

**T**he initial contributions will be either from your acquaintances or by people who cannot publish their research in better journals. Here by saying “better”, understand

all the other journals in the area. A good tip here would be to narrow the scope of the journal and properly select its name to brand it as the only journal covering that particular scope. Anyway, the initial quality of research and quantity of manuscripts presented in the newly born journal will be very far from outstanding, however, that does not mean that the editorial can accept any submitted paper to fill up the space; the rules of the peer-review and at least the basic scientific standards should be kept. Since the initial mainstream submissions of the articles will not directly work towards the increase of the journal's impact factor, the invited articles from the known people who would contribute because of personally knowing you or because of persistent requests received from you will be essential. The initial issues of the journal can also include extra sections, such as analytical reviews from the members of editorial, news and views, re-publication of selected lectures etc., to make the overall content appealing for the subscribers.

**O**f course, what I wrote describes only the tip of the iceberg, however, thoroughly understanding the cutting-edge research in your area, knowing/meeting people who do that research, and studying the structure of contemporary publishers should be the best start for such an ambitious project. With a well thought management, the journal can gain some reputation within about 10 years and become the best one in 50 years or so, if the major advice of the first paragraph is not applicable.

This is a blog entry in my personal blog page where I try to gather my notes, thoughts and tutorials on science, IT etc., after making them more readable. All the PDF versions of the notes deposited here can be downloaded through my home page (<http://www.cantab.net/users/aleksahak/> | Blog). In case the blog entry is of general interest and you would like to include that in your medium (journal, blog, web-page etc...), feel free to do so, given that you notify me and do not alter the content and authorship.