

EDITORIAL

Journal editors should be productive role models

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Abstract

In the evolving landscape of academic publishing, the role of journal editors extends beyond mere gatekeeping; they are pivotal in shaping the integrity and productivity of scholarly discourse. This editorial explores the imperative for journal editors to embody the qualities of productive role models within their respective fields. Demonstrating effective time management, ethical decision-making, and a commitment to continuous learning can inspire authors, reviewers, and the broader academic community. The editorial highlights key attributes that define productive role models, including transparency in editorial processes, responsiveness to feedback, and the promotion of diverse perspectives in published research. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of mentorship, where editors actively engage with emerging scholars, fostering an inclusive environment that encourages innovation and collaboration. Adopting these practices not only enhance the quality of their publications but also contribute to a culture of excellence in research. This editorial advocates for a shift in the perception of editorial roles, positioning editors as leaders who champion productivity and ethical standards in academia. Ultimately, this perspective underscores the significance of editorial influence in shaping the future of scholarly publishing, encouraging a more dynamic and responsible approach to knowledge dissemination.

Keywords: Academic publication; journal editor; scientific contribution; healthcare science; role models

In the evolving landscape of academic publishing, journal editors hold a transformative role that extends far beyond the traditional responsibilities of gatekeeping and manuscript selection (Caellegh, 1993). As pivotal architects of scholarly discourse, they possess the capacity to influence the direction, quality, and ethical standards of research in profound ways (Marcovitch, 2008). This editorial explores the imperative for journal editors to embrace their roles as productive role models, exemplifying the qualities and practices necessary to inspire authors, reviewers, and the broader academic community (Patel, 2013). In doing so, they can substitute an environment of trust, innovation, and excellence, ensuring that academic publishing remains a cornerstone of intellectual advancement (Tanwar, 2024). One of the foundational attributes of a productive journal editor is effective time management (Glonti et al., 2013). Balancing the myriad responsibilities of reviewing submissions, coordinating peer reviews, and responding to queries from authors and reviewers demands a disciplined approach to scheduling and prioritization. Adhering to clearly defined timelines and maintaining prompt communication set an example for the scholarly community, emphasizing the importance of efficiency in academic endeavors (Jumbam et al., 2022). This not only facilitates smoother workflows but also enhances the experience for authors and reviewers, who often face pressures to meet their own professional deadlines. In this context, the editor's ability to manage time effectively becomes a catalyst for productivity across the entire publishing process. The following are 10 key points that highlight the productive role models essential for the daily life of a journal editor.

1. Definition of Productive Role Models

In the context of academic publishing, a productive role model embodies the qualities and behaviors that inspire and guide others in their professional journeys. A productive role model in this field is not only proficient in editorial tasks but also exemplifies integrity, commitment, and a passion for scholarly communication (Moher et al., 2017). They serve as a beacon for emerging editors and researchers, demonstrating how to navigate the complexities of the publishing process while upholding the highest standards of quality and ethics. Embodying these values contribute to nurturing a culture of

excellence within the academic community and strive for similar achievements. Effective journal editors possess a unique set of characteristics that distinguish them as productive role models. First and foremost, they demonstrate strong communication skills, which are essential for conveying constructive feedback to authors and facilitating clear dialogue among reviewers (Glonti et al., 2020). These editors are also adept at critical thinking and evaluate submissions thoroughly and make informed decisions based on the merits of each manuscript. Furthermore, they exhibit adaptability, embracing changes in publishing trends and technologies to enhance competencies (Matarese & Shashok, 2018). This willingness improves their own effectiveness and sets an example for others in the field. Moreover, illustrating the importance of staying current in a rapidly changing academic landscape is fundamental for journal editor (**Figure 1**).

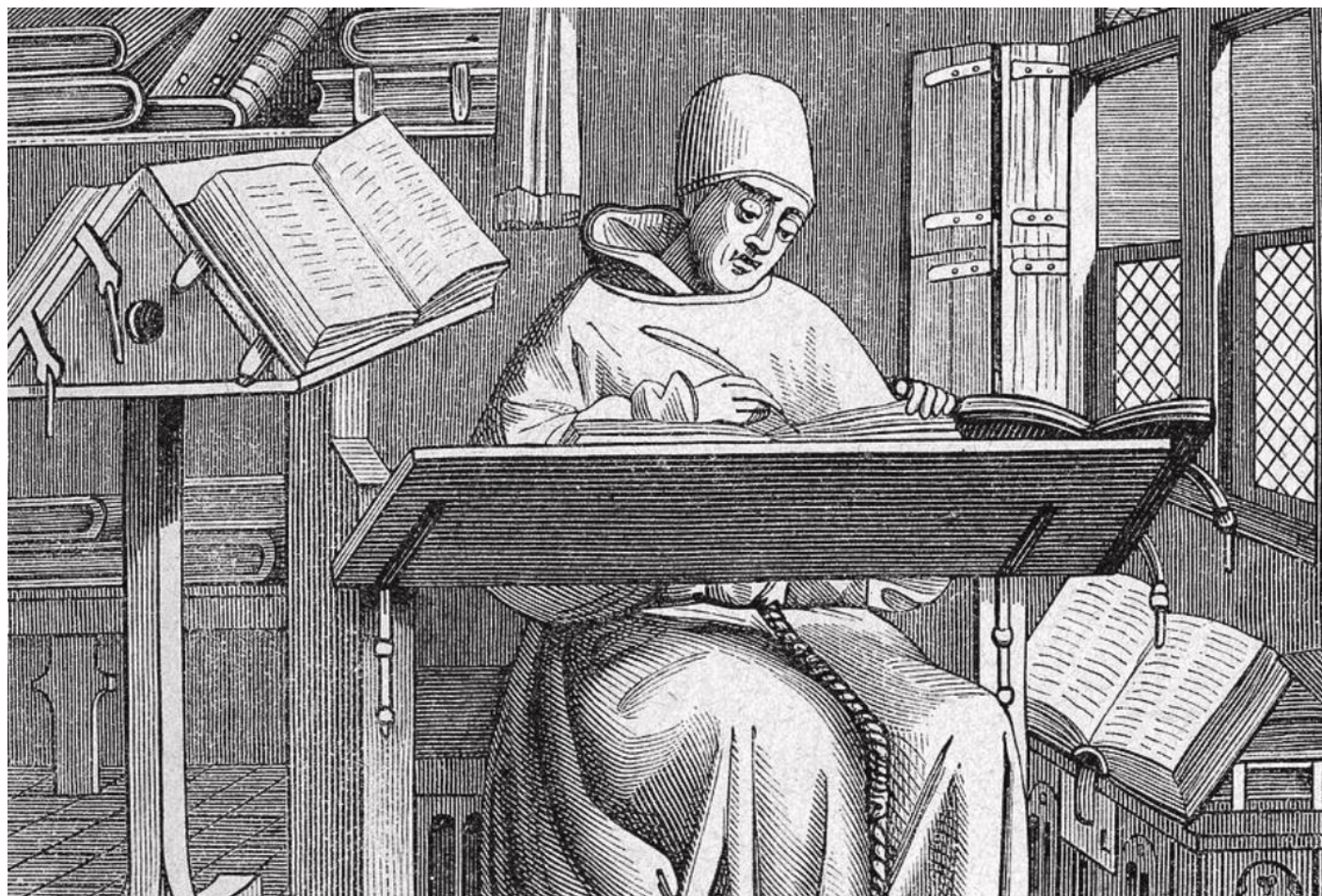


Figure 1. Illustration of academic writing (Courtesy of www.sciencephotogallery.com).

Additionally, productive role models in academic publishing are committed to mentorship and collaboration. They recognize the significance of nurturing the next generation of researchers and editors and providing guidance. Improving a collaborative environment encourage teamwork among editorial board members and create a space (Wager et al., 2021). Their dedication to continuous learning further underscores their role as effective mentors, as they actively seek out new knowledge and best practices. In doing so, they enhance their own capabilities and inspire those around them to pursue lifelong learning of professional development.

2. Impact on Scholarly Discourse

Editors play a pivotal role in maintaining the quality and integrity of published research and serving as gatekeepers of academic community (Wyatt et al., 2023). Carefully selecting manuscripts that meet rigorous methodological and ethical standards uphold the credibility of journals and safeguard the trust in publishing. For instance, in innovation research, editors might prioritize studies that present novel methodologies or transformative findings. They may reject manuscripts

that lack sufficient data validation or ethical approval to protecting the integrity. Furthermore, editors often guide authors in improving the clarity and depth of their work through constructive feedback, enhancing the overall quality of the research (Cushman, 2023). This dual responsibility of curating and refining content enables editors to act as key arbiters of academic excellence. In addition to upholding quality, editors significantly influence academic conversations and trends by determining which topics and perspectives gain visibility. Through strategic editorial decisions, they can amplify emerging areas of research, encourage interdisciplinary collaboration, and highlight underrepresented voices in the field (Boerckel et al., 2021). For example, in innovation research, an editor might focus on publishing studies that explore sustainable technological advancements or the integration of artificial intelligence in healthcare. Prioritizing such themes can direct scholarly attention toward critical global challenges and drives societal progress. Additionally, special issues or editorials on cutting-edge topics—such as green innovation or inclusive design—can set the tone for future research across disciplines (Thomas et al., 2022). Moreover, editors act as leaders in shaping the ethical landscape of academic publishing. Beyond enforcing ethical guidelines, they have the power to advocate for practices and enhance the reproducibility of research. For instance, an editor might introduce policies requiring authors to share data sets and methodology details openly. In innovation research, where rapid advancements often necessitate iterative experimentation, such practices can accelerate discovery and application. A notable example is the adoption of registered reports in certain journals, which require peer review of study designs before data collection begins. This innovative approach reduces publication bias and ensures that studies addressing important questions. Embracing and implementing such advancements enhance the integrity of their journals and contribute to a more trustworthy academic ecosystem.

3. Ethical Standards and Integrity

Ethical decision-making is a cornerstone of editorial practices, as it ensures that the dissemination of knowledge upholds the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and responsibility (Graf et al., 2007). Editors are entrusted with the task of evaluating submissions for their scientific validity, ethical rigor, and contribution to the field. In innovation health research, ethical editorial practices are critical since the advancements directly impact patient care and public health. For instance, an editor must thoroughly scrutinize studies involving human participants to confirm adherence to ethical protocols, such as obtaining informed consent and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (Klitzman, 2013). Publishing studies with questionable ethical practices risks harm to participants and undermines the credibility of the journal and the field at large. Thus, ethical decision-making in editorial roles safeguards the integrity of published research and ensures its alignment with the broader societal good. Editors can model ethical behavior by demonstrating fairness, accountability, and transparency in their decision-making processes. Fairness entails evaluating submissions solely on their scientific merit, free from biases related to the authors' affiliations, gender, or geographic location (Grapsa, 2020). Transparency involves clear communication with authors and reviewers, such as providing detailed feedback on rejection or revision decisions (Alves et al., 2022). Accountability includes adhering to established guidelines, like those from the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), to handle issues like conflicts of interest, plagiarism, or data falsification (Rennie, 1993). For example, in the field of innovation health research, an editor might address a case where a submission omits critical information about potential conflicts of interest with pharmaceutical sponsors. Transparently investigating and resolving such cases demonstrates a commitment to ethical principles and standard for authors, reviewers, and the broader academic community.

Beyond their own practices, editors play a proactive role in promoting integrity across the research ecosystem. They can establish journal policies that encourage ethical behavior, such as mandatory data-sharing requirements, robust peer review processes, and the adoption of ethical declarations by authors. For example, in innovation health research, an editor might implement a policy requiring studies to disclose all funding sources and any affiliations that could influence findings (McKechnie et al., 2023). Furthermore, editors can prioritize publishing research on ethical issues in health innovation, such as the equitable distribution of cutting-edge treatments or the ethical implications of using artificial intelligence in diagnostics. Through such efforts, editors serve as role models for ethical behavior and advancing a culture of integrity and advancement of knowledge.

4. Mentorship and Guidance

Editors play a critical role in mentoring emerging scholars and researchers by offering guidance and enhancing the quality of the manuscript. Editors are uniquely positioned to provide constructive feedback that helps new researchers refine their methodologies, strengthen their arguments, and communicate findings (Iborra et al., 2022). In the context of innovation health research, mentoring is especially vital because of advancements and novel methodologies rapidly evolved.

Emerging scholars often bring fresh perspectives but may lack experience in navigating the complex standards of academic publishing. For instance, an editor reviewing a manuscript on using artificial intelligence in telemedicine could guide the author in addressing potential ethical concerns, improving clarity in presenting algorithms, or aligning findings with real-world healthcare needs. Providing feedback help young researchers align their work with the expectations of the field. Providing constructive feedback is a key strategy editors use to improve growth among emerging researchers (Shashok, 2008). Effective feedback is specific, actionable, and balanced, addressing both strengths and areas for improvement. Editors can structure their comments to highlight the manuscript's potential and offering practical suggestions for revision. For example, if an early-career researcher submits a study on wearable health technologies that lacks comprehensive data analysis, an editor might recommend additional statistical approaches or suggest collaboration with an experienced biostatistician. To avoid discouragement, editors can frame critiques as opportunities for growth, emphasizing the value of persistence in research (Janke et al., 2017). Additionally, editors can provide resources to guide authors in strengthening their work (**Figure 2**). In innovation health research, such feedback can be transformative in shaping a researcher's approach to collaborative and impactful studies.



Figure 2. Illustration of academic discussion (Courtesy of www.pexels.com).

Editors can further support professional development by creating a supportive environment where emerging researchers feel encouraged to improve and excel. They can enhance this by offering detailed, constructive feedback that highlights strengths while guiding authors to address weaknesses effectively. Organizing educational initiatives, such as writing workshops or webinars on navigating the publishing process, provides researchers with valuable tools to enhance their skills. Additionally, editors can promote innovation by prioritizing interdisciplinary research and publishing cutting-edge studies that challenge conventional thinking. Panel discussions tailored for early-career researchers can help demystify the publishing process and enhance skills. For example, an editor of a journal focusing on health innovation could organize a session on effectively communicating technological advances to a non-specialist audience, helping

researchers make their findings more accessible. Moreover, editors can advocate for mentorship opportunities within their journals, such as pairing early-career researchers with senior reviewers for co-reviewing assignments. This approach builds expertise and strengthens the researcher's confidence in scholarly writing. Actively engaging in initiatives contribute to the development of a new generation of scholars who are well-prepared to advance innovation health research and ensure a vibrant academic future.

5. Time Management and Productivity

Effective time management is essential for editors to balance their demanding responsibilities and productivity in both their editorial roles and personal academic endeavors. Editors must manage tasks such as manuscript screening, coordinating peer reviews, providing feedback, and overseeing journal policies to strict deadlines. One effective technique is prioritization, where tasks are ranked based on urgency and importance. For instance, an editor handling innovation health research manuscripts might prioritize articles on emerging healthcare technologies with time-sensitive implications, such as pandemic response tools. Using tools like project management software or digital calendars can help editors organize their workload, allocate sufficient time, and avoid bottlenecks. Structuring their daily schedules around priority tasks can streamline workflows and ensure timely decision-making journal operations. Another crucial technique is delegation, which allows editors to focus on high-level responsibilities while leveraging the expertise of associate editors, reviewers, and administrative staff. Assigning specific tasks—such as preliminary manuscript checks or managing reviewer communications—helps alleviate the editor's workload while fostering collaboration within the editorial team. For example, in the field of innovation health research, where submissions might include complex interdisciplinary studies, editors can delegate manuscripts requiring specialized expertise to associate editors with relevant domain knowledge. Delegation enhances efficiency and ensures that manuscripts receive informed and thorough evaluations. Additionally, employing standardized review templates or checklists can rationalize the review process and save time and minimize the need for extensive back-and-forth communication.

Balancing editorial responsibilities with personal research and professional commitments requires a disciplined approach to time allocation and boundary-setting. Editors, often active researchers themselves, must carve out dedicated time for their academic projects without compromising their editorial duties. Establishing clear boundaries can prevent role overlap and reduce burnout. For instance, an editor involved in innovation health research might schedule specific periods for writing grant proposals or conducting lab work. Furthermore, leveraging downtime—such as reviewing manuscripts during travel or summarizing editorial board meetings after conferences—can enhance productivity. Adopting these techniques can maintain a healthy balance between their journal, own academic and professional growth.

6. Encouraging Diversity and Inclusion

Editors are essential in fostering a variety of viewpoints and inclusive practices in academic publishing across varied populations. Diversity in research authorship and topics enhances the relevance and impact of published studies, especially in fields like innovation health research, where solutions must cater to diverse communities. Editors can actively encourage submissions from underrepresented groups by issuing calls for papers that focus on global health disparities, indigenous health, or culturally sensitive healthcare technologies. For example, a journal might invite research exploring how innovative wearable health devices can be adapted to low-resource settings or marginalized populations, addressing equity in healthcare access. Broadening the scope of published research contribute to a more inclusive academic conversation that benefits both science and society. To support underrepresented voices, editors can implement initiatives that reduce barriers to participation in publishing. Offering fee waivers or financial assistance for researchers from low-income countries can make high-quality journals more accessible (Gardner et al., 2021). Additionally, editors can collaborate with institutions to provide mentoring programs that guide early-career researchers from marginalized backgrounds through the publication process. For instance, in innovation health research, an editor might pair authors from underrepresented communities with experienced reviewers or co-authors to strengthen their manuscripts and increase their chances of publication. Similarly, adopting double-anonymized peer review processes ensures that reviewers assess submissions based solely on merit and minimizing potential biases related to the authors' identities, affiliations, or geographic locations. Such measures create a level playing field, empowering diverse voices to contribute meaningfully to academic discourse.

Editors can play a proactive role in developing editorial policies that emphasize the importance of diversity and inclusion, in addition to enhancing access. They might develop special issues focused on topics like healthcare innovation for underserved populations, integrating a variety of cultural, ethical, and social perspectives. Additionally, forming editorial boards that represent diverse regions, genders, and academic backgrounds ensures that decision-making reflects

a wide array of viewpoints. For example, an editor might recruit experts in indigenous health, women's health, or rural healthcare innovation to their board. Embedding inclusivity into their editorial practices can elevate the quality and relevance of their journals and improve an academic environment in innovation health research.

7. Adaptation to Technological Advances

In the rapidly evolving scenery of academic publishing, embracing technological tools is crucial for enhancing editorial efficiency. Editors are often inundated with a high volume of submissions necessitating processes to manage workloads effectively. Utilizing digital tools such as manuscript management systems, editors can automate various aspects of the submission and review process and reducing administrative burdens. For instance, platforms like Editorial Manager (Figure 3) and WILEY (Figure 4) streamline the workflow by allowing authors to submit manuscripts online. It also allows editors to monitor submissions, oversee the peer review process, and engage in real-time communication with both reviewers and authors. This saves time, reduces the potential for errors, lead faster publication times and improve author satisfaction.



Figure 3. Editorial manager submission system (Courtesy of www.ariessys.com)

Moreover, staying updated with trends in digital publishing and artificial intelligence (AI) is essential for editors to maintain their competitive edge (Kaebnick et al., 2024). The integration of AI in the editorial process can significantly enhance decision-making and improve the quality of published research. For example, AI-driven tools like Manuscript Matcher can assist editors in identifying suitable reviewers based on their expertise and previous work. Additionally, AI can analyze large datasets to identify emerging trends in research, enabling editors to curate special issues or thematic collections that address current gaps in the literature. Attending workshops, webinars, and conferences focused on digital publishing innovations can stay informed about the latest advancements and best practices. In the realm of innovation health research, the importance of embracing technology becomes even more pronounced. As health research increasingly relies on data-driven insights, editors must be adept at handling complex datasets and understanding the implications of new technologies. For example, the rise of telemedicine and digital health interventions has led to a surge in research on their effectiveness and implementation. Editors who utilize data analytics tools can better evaluate the impact of these studies. Furthermore, by collaborations with tech companies and researchers in the field, editors can facilitate the development of innovative solutions that enhance the quality of health research. This proactive approach

elevates the standard of published work by ensuring that research meets rigorous quality and ethical benchmarks. Adopting innovations such as AI-assisted peer review, digital archiving, and transparent editorial workflows help processes and enhance accessibility for researchers and readers alike. This positions editors as pivotal leaders in modernizing the academic publishing landscape, bridging traditional practices with forward-thinking solutions. Their leadership fosters efficiency and sets a benchmark for integrating technology in ways that uphold integrity and inclusivity. Finally, this commitment to innovation reinforces the role of editors as catalysts for progress in scholarly communication.

WILEY

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Figure 4. WILEY submission system (Courtesy of www.wiley.atyponrex.com).

8. Community Engagement

Editors engaging with the broader academic community serve as good example in fostering collaboration, knowledge dissemination, and advancements in research (Groom, 2008). Actively participating in academic forums, conferences, and workshops can bridge the gap between the editorial process and the research community. Their engagement allows them to identify emerging trends, understand researchers' challenges, and align journal priorities with the needs of the field. For example, in innovation health research, an editor attending a global health summit might encounter groundbreaking studies on AI-powered diagnostic tools or wearable health technologies. Recognizing these advancements can curate special issues or themed calls for papers to promote further exploration of these cutting-edge topics. Collaboration between editors and researchers creates opportunities for knowledge sharing those benefits both parties (BMC Medicine, 2022). Editors can provide insights into the publication process, helping researchers, especially early-career scholars, navigate common challenges like structuring manuscripts or addressing reviewer feedback (Ajiferuke et al., 2021). Conversely, researchers can share field-specific expertise, guiding editors on emerging methodologies, ethical considerations, or underexplored areas of study. For instance, in innovation health research, a researcher specializing in telemedicine could collaborate with an editor to develop guidelines for evaluating studies that integrate digital health technologies. These collaborations improve the quality of submissions and mutual understanding and trust between editors and the research community.

Engaging with the broader academic community also enables editors to build networks that promote interdisciplinary research and global perspectives (Perkel, 2020). Collaborating with researchers from diverse fields can identify intersections between disciplines, such as the application of machine learning in public health or the development of culturally sensitive healthcare technologies. For example, an editor might work with experts in engineering, sociology, and healthcare to encourage submissions that address the ethical implications of health innovations in underserved populations. Additionally, editors can facilitate partnerships between journals and academic institutions to support

knowledge-sharing initiatives like open-access publishing or data-sharing platforms. Such efforts elevate the journal's reputation and contribute to the advancement of equitable and impactful research. Furthermore, actively engaging with the academic community reinforce their role as key influencers in shaping the direction of scholarly inquiry and innovation.

9. Future Directions for Editorial Leadership

The role of editors is likely to undergo significant evolution as the academic person becomes increasingly digital, interdisciplinary, and global. In the future, editors will play an even greater role in navigating technological advancements, ensuring ethical integrity, and fostering inclusivity. In innovation health research, where the rapid pace of technological development continually redefines what is possible, editors must adapt to assess the scientific rigor of manuscripts, societal impact, and ethical considerations. For instance, as artificial intelligence becomes more integrated into healthcare, editors may face challenges in evaluating studies that lack transparency in algorithmic design or fail to address biases in machine learning models. To stay ahead, editors will need to develop expertise in emerging technologies, collaborate with multidisciplinary experts, and establish rigorous guidelines for evaluating such cutting-edge research. Maintaining productivity while balancing leadership responsibilities will remain a significant challenge for editors in this evolving landscape. The rise in manuscript submissions, coupled with the demand for rapid publication cycles, has already placed pressure on editorial teams to streamline processes without compromising quality. Automation tools, such as AI-powered manuscript triage and peer-review management systems, present opportunities to enhance efficiency, allowing editors to focus on more strategic tasks. For example, in innovation health research, editors could leverage AI to identify trends in submissions, such as the increasing use of blockchain in healthcare data security, and prioritize thematic issues to address these advancements. However, the integration of such tools also raises concerns about over-reliance on technology and the potential for biases in automated systems. Editors will need to strike a balance by combining technological solutions with human oversight to maintain high editorial standards and fairness. Opportunities for editors to demonstrate leadership will expand as the need for transparency, inclusivity, and global collaboration grows in academic publishing. Editors can champion open-access initiatives, promote the inclusion of underrepresented voices, and facilitate interdisciplinary research. For instance, an editor of a journal on innovation health research could create partnerships with global health organizations to encourage submissions addressing healthcare equity in low-resource settings. The challenge will be ensuring that these initiatives are sustainable and impactful amidst the growing complexity of the publishing landscape. Embracing these opportunities and addressing challenges head-on can cement their role as visionaries and leaders in advancing scholarly discourse.

In conclusion, the evolving responsibilities of journal editors call for a shift in how their roles are perceived and enacted. Embodying the qualities of productive role models—including effective time management, ethical decision-making, a commitment to continuous learning, and active mentorship—can significantly influence the trajectory of academic publishing. These practices enhance the quality and integrity of their publications while fostering a culture of excellence and innovation within the academic community. As leaders who champion productivity and ethical standards, journal editors have the unique opportunity to shape the future of scholarly communication, ensuring that it remains a vibrant and responsible vehicle for knowledge dissemination in an ever-changing world. Happy new years of 2025!

Editor's declaration

This editorial manuscript has been written at the lead author's initiative to provide a fresh perspective and motivation for those serving as Editors in scientific publications.

AI statements

The authors affirm that they did not use AI to generate the writing or ideas during the process of this editorial manuscript.

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Editor's perspective

Innovation points

- Journal editors should seek and prioritize manuscripts that address emerging trends in health innovation.
- Editors must model ethical decision-making by ensuring studies adhere to rigorous ethical guidelines.
- Providing constructive feedback and fostering collaborations can guide authors in producing impactful studies.

Potential areas of interest

- How can journal editors demonstrate productivity while maintaining the quality and integrity of the peer-review process?
- In what ways can journal editors inspire and mentor early-career researchers through their role as productive role models?
- What strategies can journal editors implement to balance their own research, editorial responsibilities, and the professional development of contributors?

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