

Journal of Bioethical Inquiry

Information for Guest Editors for Symposia and Special Issues

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1. Symposia and Special Issues

The JBI encourages submission of proposals and guest editorships for both Symposia and Special Issues.

Both Symposia and Special Issues:

- allow for exploratory discussions of issues that are pressing or are foremost in the public consciousness
- enable scholars to extend the focus and depth of examination of specific issues
- provide a means for the detailed re-examination of 'old' issues through different methodological or disciplinary lenses
- offer a first step for academics to learn valuable editorials skills, and
- broaden access to new and diverse readerships.

The main difference between a Symposium and a Special Issue is that the former does not aim for the same kind of depth made possible in the extended format of the latter. Rather, Symposia are intended to spark further debate and bring together disparate voices working in related areas.

2. Submission of proposals for Symposium and Special Issues

The JBI accepts proposals for Symposia and Special Issues on an ongoing basis.

Proposals should be addressed to the Editor-in-Chief (Content) and consist of a one- to two-page outline that includes:

- a description of the proposed topic
- the names of the proposed Guest Editor(s) (i.e., the Convenors), including a description of their previous editorial experience
- the rationale for the proposal
- the significance of the topic
- the likely readership, including why readers of the JBI would have an interest in this thematic issue and why this thematic issue would attract a new readership to the JBI
- the names of four to eight potential contributors, taking into account that there is often difficulty in securing academics of international standing and a potential failure rate of up to 50 per cent among those approached
- a statement about the kinds of disciplines that will be represented in the thematic issue and how it will contribute to the commitment of the JBI to promote interdisciplinary dialogue
- a statement about the types of articles that may included in the Symposia/Special Issues, such as Original Research, Review Articles, Current Controversies, Book, Film and Art Reviews, and so forth
- a list of proposed authors and/or papers, if possible, and
- whether any of the manuscripts have previously been published in part or in full in a book, monograph, or journal (print or online) and the status of obtaining permissions to reprint these articles. (It is the JBI's preference NOT to publish works that have been published elsewhere unless there is a compelling justification for doing so.)

3. Symposia and Special Issue Length, Word Limits and Deadlines

Special Issues and Symposia can be structured at the discretion of the Guest Editors and can include different types of articles of varying length including Original Research, Review Articles and Current Controversies. Other formats such as reviews, poems, and artwork can also be included where appropriate and agreed to by the Executive Committee. All Special Issues and Symposia must also include a Guest Editorial.

Special Issues should include a minimum of eight articles and may be up to 100,000 words/140 pages in total. Symposia should consist of a minimum of four articles and may be up to 78,000 words/100 pages in total.

We prefer that the Guest Editors of the symposium not co-author too many of the manuscripts in the symposium.

Final copy deadlines for each issue are non-negotiable, so any variations to the structure, composition and timelines agreed with the JBI need to be approved in advance by the Managing Editor and Editor-in-Chief (Production) of the JBI.

4. Overview of Editorial Responsibilities of Guest Editors of Symposia and Special Issues

Acting as a Guest Editor is incredibly rewarding, both professionally and personally, and enables scholars to expand bioethical discussions and dialogues with others from around the globe. Although this can be time- and labour-intensive, the Managing Editor and the Editor-in-Chief (Production) of the JBI assist Guest Editors at every step of the process. As needed, assistance is available for disseminating calls for papers, becoming familiar with the JBI online manuscript submission process, ensuring manuscripts are moving through the peer-review process in a timely manner, etc. All final copy-editing and production tasks are handled by the JBI's Editor-in-Chief (Production). Guest Editors are not responsible for these tasks.

The Editors in Chief and Executive Committee of the JBI also maintain overall editorial responsibility for Symposia and Special Issues, and the JBI Editorial Board is consulted on topics and proposals and, as necessary, any issues that arise.

All manuscripts, including those that are invited, are subject to the appropriate level of independent peer review. It is important to make clear to invited authors that an invitation to submit to a Symposia or Special Issue does not guarantee acceptance and publication.

All manuscripts must be submitted through the JBI online system and prepared in accordance with the JBI style guide and submission instructions.

Guest Editors of Symposia and Special Issues have two main tasks. The first is to author/co-author an Editorial that will introduce the Symposium or Special Issue. The second is to oversee the submission and peer review of all manuscripts included in the Symposia/Special Issue and ensure that deadlines are met in a timely fashion. The Managing Editor and Editor-in-Chief (Production) will maintain ongoing communications with Guest Editors regarding deadlines, processes for peer review, and the preparation of manuscripts.

5. Editorial Etiquette

Scholarship is stimulating but difficult and it is challenging to have one's ideas or work critiqued by others. For this reason, we would ask that in performing your role as Guest Editor you consider the following:

- *Be respectful to the authors.* Be critical, constructive, fair, and respectful of disciplinary differences. If a reviewer's comments are not constructive and respectful, then you should consider selecting those parts of the review that are useful and/or seek alternative reviews.
- *Be respectful of confidentiality.* The unpublished manuscript that you are managing is a privileged confidential communication so, once you have completed your editorial responsibilities, please do not keep copies on your computer or in hard copy, use it for teaching, use it in your own research, or copy or distribute any part of it.
- *Declare any relevant competing or conflicting interests.*
- *Be brave.* You have been invited to act as a Guest Editor because of your expertise in the topic, discipline area and/or methodology – so please feel free to make a recommendation to the Editor-in-Chief (Content) that you believe is appropriate.
- *Be frank when making confidential comments to the Editor-in-Chief (Content).* The editorial process allows you to make comments to the Editor-in-Chief that the author

will not see. This may include your opinions about the ethical probity of the manuscript.

- *Be consistent.* It is important that the feedback that you give to the author aligns with that you give to the Editor-in-Chief (Content). While there may be things that you wish to share with the Editor-in-Chief (Content) and not with authors, providing positive feedback to the authors while at the same time recommending to the Editor-in-Chief (Content) that the paper be rejected can be confusing for authors and place the editor-in-Chief (Content) in a difficult situation.
- *Be humble.* Do not write a review describing the paper you would have written – this does not help the Editor-in-Chief (Content) assess the merits of this manuscript and does not help the authors improve *their* paper.

6. Editorial tasks of Guest Editors

As a Guest Editor you are responsible for handling manuscripts that have been submitted for inclusion in your Symposia/Special Issue. This includes: invitation of reviewers; assessment of submitted manuscripts; making a recommendation to the Editor-in-Chief (Content) based on the invited reviews and your own assessment of the manuscript; and management of revisions. For each manuscript you must commission a minimum of two independent reviews – your recommendation is in addition to these two reviews. The JBI aims to complete the review and final decision process as quickly as possible. This requires regular and prompt attention to the process of inviting reviewers, replacing reviewers who have declined to review or failed to submit their review with new reviewers, and reminding reviewers who have agreed to review.

All manuscripts for Symposia/Special Issues must be submitted by the authors via our publisher's online manuscript management system, "Editorial Manager". The JBI Editorial Staff will create a manuscript category specifically for your Symposium or Special Issue and you will need to advise authors to select this when they submit their manuscripts online (rather than simply selecting general categories, for example, 'Original Research'). This ensures manuscripts that are meant to be included in the Symposia/Special Issue can be identified and assigned to Guest Editors.

All manuscripts must be formatted in accordance with the JBI's style guidelines. If manuscripts are not formatted appropriately, they will be sent back to the authors for further revision. This can disrupt editorial and production processes and delay publication of the Symposia/Special Issue. If authors are unable to format their manuscript, they may request that JBI copy-editors assist them to do so. The costs associated with copy-editing, which is arranged through the Editorial Manager, are borne by the authors.

a. *Receiving an Assignment*

When the Managing Editor has selected you to handle a manuscript that is part of your Special Issue or Symposium you will receive an email notification of a new assignment. To access the manuscript you will need to click on the link contained in this invitation email to accept the assignment. You will then need to look at the manuscript to determine whether it is of sufficient standard to be sent out for review. This is an important step because if you feel that the manuscript is of low quality and

that there is little likelihood that it will be published, even with revisions, it is better for the authors, the Symposia/Special issue, and the JBI to make this determination early and make a recommendation to *Reject without Review*. If you think that the manuscript is not of sufficient standard to send out for review you may also choose to recommend *Revise before Review*. (This option is particularly useful in cases where the English language skill of the author is the primary problem.)

b. Inviting Reviewers

Each manuscript should be reviewed by at least two independent reviewers. To ensure that peer review is completed in a timely manner there are several things that you should do. The first is to invite three to four reviewers to review the manuscript – assuming that often reviewers are unavailable, too busy to assist, or simply do not reply to the invitation to review. The second is to check if the corresponding author has made reviewer suggestions in their cover letter. If you decide to invite a reviewer suggested by the author, it will be important to verify that they are independent. The third is to stay aware of the status of reviews for the manuscripts you are managing.

The Editorial Manager system allows you to search for reviewers who are already in the JBI reviewer registry. You may, however, wish to send the manuscript to other reviewers from your own contacts, from academics who have expertise relevant to the Symposia/Special Issue, or from searches of external databases who are not already registered. To do so you must first register them as a new reviewer. This is done by clicking on ‘Register and invite new reviewer’.

You may wish to use Symposium/Special Issue authors as reviewers on other manuscripts. If you do so we would ask that these reviewers do not have a conflict of interest and that at least one reviewer per manuscript is not someone who is contributing to the issue.

Once you agree to manage a manuscript you will receive email notifications of your invitations to reviewers; the responses of reviewers (whether they agree to review, decline to review, or do not reply and are ‘uninvited’); submissions of reviews; and when reviews are complete and a decision is needed on the manuscript. You can respond to these email prompts instantly by logging into the system. Alternatively, you may find it easier to simply log in to your account each week to check the status of your reviewer invitations and editorial tasks. However you decide to manage your manuscripts, it is critically important that you act promptly wherever an editorial action is needed (to accept a manuscript from the Editors, to invite reviewers, to invite additional reviewers if initial invitations are not responded to or in reviewers are unable to assist, and to make editorial decisions once reviews are complete), as delays in processing manuscripts are unfair on authors and reviewers and may delay publication of the Symposia/Special Issue.

c. Reminding Reviewers

Once a reviewer has agreed to review it is often useful to send the reviewer a reminder both so that they complete the review and that they are not automatically ‘uninvited’. You might do this by checking the status of these reviews when you log in to your account each week. Or you might set yourself a reminder in your calendar when each review is due so that you can send an email reminder to the reviewer a week or so before their review is due. These reminders should be sent within

Editorial Manager so that the Editorial Manager technical support person, and the Managing Editor, both of whom check on the progress of overdue manuscripts, do not duplicate these reminders and unintentionally bombard the reviewers with multiple reminders! To do so find the manuscript in your 'Reviews in progress', 'Submissions requiring additional reviewers', or 'Submissions with one or more late reviews' menu item and then select 'Send email' from the left-hand column.

If, after a couple of reminders, the reviewer has not responded you will need to invite a replacement reviewer.

Depending on the length of time the manuscript has been in the system, you may choose to shorten the review period for these replacement reviewers. To do so you may edit the number of days to review after selecting your intended reviewer.

d. Reviewing the manuscript yourself: Review Checklist

Once the independent reviewers have completed their reviews you will receive an email notification that 'All reviews are complete'. At this point you should assess the manuscript yourself.

The following checklist may assist you in completing your own review and in evaluating the adequacy and comprehensiveness of the reviews that you have commissioned. (It is important to keep in mind, however, that the type, disciplinary background, and methodology of the manuscript will determine the types of questions that need to be considered when reviewing it.)

Topic

- Is the topic important and does the paper make an important contribution to the literature – to what is known about the issue being addressed by the author(s)?

Title

- Is the title informative?
- Does the title describe what the manuscript is about or catch the reader's attention?
- Would an international reader searching for publications about a particular issue understand it?

Abstract

- Does the abstract provide a clear summary of the paper?
- Does the abstract align with the research findings?
- Is the abstract structured in a way that confirms with the article type?

Structure

- Is the structure of the paper appropriate to the content, methodology and approach?

Introduction, background, and literature review

- Is the background and literature review adequate and current and does it place the manuscript in the appropriate context?
- Does it tell the reader why this research needs to be done and why it is important?
- Is the research question, hypothesis or focus clearly stated?

Methods

- Is the study well-designed and is the paper technically sound?
- Are the methods and analysis clear and appropriate to the type of research being done?
- Are the methods described in sufficient detail that the reader can make a judgement about their quality and enable the study to be replicated by other researchers? (In general, the methods should outline the study type, place and time of study, research population, data collection and recording, and data analysis.)

Ethics approval

- Do the authors outline the ethical oversight and approval of the study?

Funding

- Have the authors described the funding (if any) of the research and the involvement of the funder in the research and preparation of the manuscript?

Results

- Are the results clearly structured?
- Are the tables and figures clear and necessary?
- Is the analysis of the data sound? (Is the data valuable but just inappropriately analysed, and therefore potentially able to be re-analysed?)

Discussion

- Does the discussion summarise the implications of the results and identify the strengths, weaknesses, and potential limitations of the study?
- Are the conclusions valid?
- Are the claims fully supported by the data or arguments? If not, what further evidence is needed?
- Are the claims appropriately discussed in the context of previous literature?
- Does the discussion offer useful insights?
- Is the discussion clear, rigorous, relevant, and well-argued or does it contain major flaws, e.g., errors of reasoning, unsound arguments, unjustifiable generalisations, or inappropriate claims of significance for empirical results that are not statistically significant?

References

- Are the references appropriate, properly cited, authoritative and accessible?
- Have the authors failed to refer to important studies relevant to their work?

Other

- Is the writing and presentation clear and concise?
- Does the text include jargon or technical terms that may not be understood by a reader from a discipline or background different to the author(s)?
- Is the text badly written and could it be improved by copy-editing?
- Does the study raise any ethical concerns?
- Does the availability of data adhere to the expected standards of your research community?
- Could the manuscript be revised to address any potential limitations?

e. Completing Your Recommendation

Once you have reviewed the manuscript yourself and read the reports of the independent reviewers you must submit a recommendation to the Editor-in-Chief (Content).

You are provided with several recommendation options and the opportunity to make both comments to the author and confidential comments to the Editor in Chief (Content).

The following considerations may help you prepare your report and assist both the Editor-in-Chief (Content) and the authors.

- Start with a summary of the manuscript and your overall impression of the work, noting both its strengths and weaknesses.
- Provide detailed comments on the manuscript. (See Review Checklist above.)
- Be clear and prioritise your concerns. Your review will help the Editor-in-Chief (Content) make a decision about the manuscript and guide the author in revising it for publication. It is helpful, therefore, if the review is clearly worded and distinguishes between major issues that must be addressed for the paper to be considered for publication, more minor issues that are not as critical to the acceptability of the paper for publication, including where clarification or additional details are needed, and grammatical or typographical issues.
- Be specific and give examples. The more specific your feedback is, the better. Both authors and editors find general statements, such as 'not a significant contribution', 'under-theorised' or 'poorly analysed' unhelpful as they are not sufficiently clear or explicit enough to guide decision-making or revision.
- Explain your recommendations to the Editor-in-Chief and author(s) and offer specific and constructive suggestions for how the manuscript may be improved. This will help the Editor-in-Chief (Content) better understand the basis of your decision and will help authors to understand the deficiencies in their manuscript and how it may be revised to enable publication (in the JBI or elsewhere).
- Consider whether you wish to make separate comments to the Editor-in-Chief (Content). The JBI's online manuscript submission system allows you to make Confidential Comments to the Editor-in-Chief (Content). While the JBI encourages an open and constructive peer

review process you may wish to make confidential comments to the Editor-in-Chief (Content) regarding, for example, ethical concerns that you may have with the manuscript of the peer review process, the limitations of your own review, the limitations of the invited independent reviews, or whether you feel the manuscript would benefit from copy-editing to assist English-language expression.

- Take time for a final reflection. Before you submit your report and recommendation, take a moment to read it through. Are you satisfied that you have been fair in your assessment and are you satisfied that your recommendation is the correct one? And if you were the author, how would you feel if you received this report? Would you find the review constructive, and would you feel that you had been treated respectfully and professionally?

Importantly, you should not correspond directly with the author as the Editor in Chief (Content) will correspond with the authors after they have considered your recommendation and the reports of reviewers.

f. **Handling Revisions**

When revisions are submitted to the journal you will receive the revised manuscript and you must assess the author's response to the reviewers' concerns and recommendations and the changes they have made to their original submission. After doing so, you have the option to make a recommendation to 'Accept', 'Reject', or you can request further revisions. If, however, you do not feel confident making a recommendation straight away you have the option of returning the manuscript to the original reviewers or seeking new reviewers. This process should be completed as quickly as possible. Once further reviews are complete a recommendation will need to be entered according to the same process outlined for original manuscripts.

g. **Symposia/Special Issue Editorial**

Guest Editors are responsible for contributing an editorial to introduce the Symposia/Special Issue. Editorials should be 1,500-2,000 words and must be submitted via Editorial Manager two to four weeks prior to the deadline for final copy-edited manuscripts.

The editorial provides an opportunity for the Guest Editors to describe to the reader why they believe the Symposia/Special Issue addresses an important (and underexamined) area of bioethics and provide a brief outline of each of the papers included in the Symposia/Special Issue.

7. Promotion of Symposia and Special Issues

The JBI encourages Guest Editors to consider how they might disseminate and promote their Symposium of Special Issue. You can contact the Managing Editor to discuss how the JBI can support this task, including through its email network, social media, blog, and podcast.