Professional Editors or Scientist Editors? Both perspectives have value.

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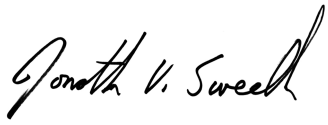
Just how does an Editor-in-Chief spend most of his time? Having been an Editor-in-Chief for a short time, this is a question that I am still trying to understand. While there are occasions to think strategically about the journal, by far the most time is spent assessing every manuscript that is submitted, examining its abstract, looking at the figures, and reading as much of the manuscript as it takes to take the next step. For most manuscripts, the next step is assigning it to our excellent team of Associate Editors, and yes, assigning some to myself. Some manuscripts I spend more time on, examining them carefully to determine if the paper fits within the scope of the journal or perhaps looking at other issues. This last group of manuscripts may not go out for external review, or perhaps an Associate Editor will be consulted before making the decision not to review it further. In many ways, this is the life of an Editor-in-Chief of ACS journals, in addition to our duties as practicing scientists.

There are other editorial systems, with perhaps the most obvious example being the one used by the highly influential *Nature* family of journals. First, let me be clear that while I certainly am a scientist/editor, I have no issues with the professional editors used by the Nature family of journals. It was with some surprise that I read an Editorial this fall that calls into question the practice of journals such as *Analytical Chemistry* (and in fact, a large number of journals in all scientific disciplines) of using editors who are scientists first to shepherd papers through the review process.

Thus, their comments on the editorial approach we use caught my attention. According to the editors of *Nature Chemical Biology*: "... we submit that journals coordinated by professional editors offer unique and important advantages to the scientific community" and "... we submit that professional editors' pursuit of a single objective—to find and publish the best scientific papers—provides a strong correlation with the success of a particular journal according to almost any measure."[1] I spend time every day working on the journal with the goal of selecting the best papers for publication in *Analytical Chemistry*, and I would guess this is the goal of all editors.

Of course, there is a difference between the two models. The specialized Nature journals such as *Nature Chemical Biology*, *Nature Chemistry*, and *Nature Methods* each only publish about 140 articles per year, less than 10% of the number we publish, and most articles received do not get reviewed. I do not believe that the "boutique" model of publishing (small and selective) can be made to fit the goals of other peer-reviewed journals to review and publish high quality research articles, in a way that is as open and fair as possible. As a result, many broader-focus journals literally publish orders of magnitude more articles. While I enjoy staying at the special boutique hotel occasionally, and yes, I also enjoy publishing in the boutique journals, they certainly cannot replace the mainstays, which are the "trade" journals that publish most of science.

Yes, I do have a day-time job, but when working on the journal each day, my focus is on the science in front of me. I truly believe our division and the field are well served with the dedication of our outstanding pool of Associate Editors who are first and foremost well respected senior scientists. The long-term and successful history of *Analytical Chemistry* certainly supports this view.



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