Navigating Scientific Publishing in the Nature Portfolio

George Inglis, PhD Senior Editor, *Communications Biology* 

February 20, 2024

**SPRINGER NATURE** 



## **Presentation Outline**

1	Who are editors?
2	Introduction to the Nature Portfolio
3	Overview of the Publishing Process
4	Summary & Questions



# Who are editors?

1.0

## **Profile of an Editor**

- PhD-level scientist with an understanding of the publication process—as an author and reviewer
  - Ability to critically evaluate papers
  - Strong communication skills
- Understands the major challenges in their field and the current issues in publishing
- Broad interest across scientific disciplines
  - Motivated to help authors publish and communicate high-quality, robust science



## Path to Becoming an Editor



## What do Professional Editors Do?



#### 1. Manuscript handling:

- Choose which papers to publish, based on the priorities of the journal and feedback from reviewers
- Act as liaison between authors and reviewers
- 2. Keeping on top of the field:
  - Learn about the latest science by reading papers, attending conferences, going to research institutions

#### **3-4. Special projects & Other tasks:**

- Commission content: reviews, commentary, etc.
  - Organize Calls for Papers
- Organize conferences and other events
- Help promote/amplify published papers
- Handle correspondence related to published papers and publish corrections

## **3-4. Special Projects & Other Tasks**

#### **Developing Press Releases**

### Guinness yeasts are genetically unique among Irish beers

The Guinness brewery has kept a record of the yeast strains it has used going back to 1903 - a genetic analysis shows these are distinct from those used to brew other Irish beers

By Chen Ly

💾 12 January 2024

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Some yeasts currently used to brew Guinness are descendents of those used in 1903 Artur WidakNurP

#### **NewScientist**

#### Developing Collections

Collection | 10 July 2023



#### <u>Artificial intelligence in</u> <u>genomics</u>

This Collection encourages submissions that showcase how artificial intelligence can be used to improve our understanding of the genetic basis for complex traits or diseases.

Image: © [M] iaremenko / stock.adobe.com

Open for submissions

#### **Q&As with Researchers**

Check for updates

#### Q&A

Advocating for data sharing in human genomics: an interview with Chris Wallace and Guillermo Reales



Credit: Guillermo Reales. Pictured from left to right: Guillermo Reales and Chris Wallace

## What Professional Editors Don't Do



#### Evaluate the technical details of a manuscript

- For the most part, editors look at the relative advance compared to the literature.
- Specific technical details are evaluated by peer reviewers.

#### Count referee "votes"

• Editors consider each comment, the expertise of the reviewers, and whether the concerns could be reasonably addressed in a revision.

## Accept papers because they are about a "hot" topic, "impactful", or from a prominent author

- Editors evaluate each paper based on its relative contribution over previous literature.
- Just because something is flashy doesn't make it good science.
- Even great/famous researchers occasionally produce duds!

## **Science Editing vs. Science Writing**

Science Editing	Science Writing
More reading than writing	Writing is (literally) the job
<ul> <li>Mostly technical audience:</li> <li>Literature reviews</li> <li>Manuscript assessments</li> <li>Research highlights</li> <li>Press pitches</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Popular <i>or</i> technical audience:</li> <li>News stories</li> <li>Pharmaceutical product descriptions</li> <li>Etc.</li> </ul>
Focus on the data in a manuscript	Focus on the story behind a manuscript



# Introduction to the Nature Portfolio

# 2.0

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#### **Communications Journals**

### **The Nature Portfolio**



#### Widest importance and implications.

Significance should be obvious to any scientist working in any field of research.

#### Most relevant advances in a field.

Significance should be apparent to anyone in that discipline.

#### Highly significant advances that influence a field.

Broad appeal isn't a prerequisite for publication... but great science is.

Important insights into *focused* areas of research. New open access options reporting high-quality findings.

**Technically sound, quality science.** Significance is less important than sound science.

## **Communications Journals**



## **Communications Biology**

- An open access journal for all biologists
- Nature Portfolio publishing option for more specialized or interdisciplinary topics
- Less stringent criteria for **impact** than *Nature Communications* or the Nature-branded journals.
- Manuscripts make important and novel advances to others working in the same area of research

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Five years of		
Communications Biology!		
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#### Featured

Article Open Access 19 Jan 2023	Plagued by a cryptic clock: insight and issues from the global phylogeny of Yersinia <u>Restis</u> The emergence of the plague pathogen throughout history is investigated using molecular clock modelling and phylogenetic analyses. Katherine Eaton, Leo Featherstone Hendrik N. Polnar	
Article Open Access 19 Jan 2023	Learning the protein language of proteome-wide protein-protein binding sites via explainable ensemble deep learning An ensemble deep learning (EDLM-based protein-protein interaction (PPI) site identification method (EDLMPPI) accurately predicts PPIs through protein language models and outperforms state-of-the-art methods on multiple benchmark sets. Zilong Hou, Yuning Yang Xiangtao Li	
Article Open Access 17 Jan 2023	Deep reptilian evolutionary roots of a major avian respiratory adaptation A newly discovered osteological correlate for structures associated with ventilatory muscle attachment indicates a deep evolutionary history of respiratory innovation within Archosauria. Yan-yin Wang, Leon P. A. M. Claessens & Corwin Sullivan	
Article Open Access 20 Jan 2023	Machine learning identifies T cell receptor repertoire signatures associated with COVID-19 severity. Signatures associated with COVID-19 disease severity are studied, primarily using machine learning models for classification on the basis of TCR repertoire analysis and combining such data/analysis with single cell transcriptomic data.	



## **Communications Biology at NTU**

#### Phenome-wide analysis of Taiwan Biobank reveals novel glycemia-related loci and genetic risks for diabetes

<u>Chia-Jung Lee, Ting-Huei Chen, Aylwin Ming Wee Lim, Chien-Ching Chang, Jia-Jyun Sie,</u> <u>Pei-Lung Chen, Su-Wei Chang, Shang-Jung Wu, Chia-Lin Hsu, Ai-Ru Hsieh</u> <sup>⊠</sup>, Wei-Shiung <u>Yang</u> <sup>™</sup> & <u>Cathy S. J. Fann</u> <sup>™</sup>

Communications Biology 5, Article number: 1175 (2022) Cite this article

Article Open access Published: 18 October 2021

## Connecting MHC-I-binding motifs with HLA alleles via deep learning

Ko-Han Lee, Yu-Chuan Chang, Ting-Fu Chen, Hsueh-Fen Juan, Huai-Kuang Tsai & Chien-Yu Chen ⊠

Communications Biology 4, Article number: 1194 (2021) | Cite this article

Article | Open access | Published: 15 June 2023

## Ectopic ATP synthase stimulates the secretion of extracellular vesicles in cancer cells

Yi-Chun Kao, Yi-Wen Chang, Charles P. Lai, Nai-Wen Chang, Chen-Hao Huang, Chien-Sheng Chen, Hsuan-Cheng Huang <sup>I S</sup> & Hsueh-Fen Juan <sup>I S</sup>

Communications Biology 6, Article number: 642 (2023) Cite this article



#### Article Open access Published: 22 June 2023

## The effect of inhibition of receptor tyrosine kinase AXL on DNA damage response in ovarian cancer

Xun Hui Yeo, Vignesh Sundararajan, Zhengwei Wu, Zi Jin Cheryl Phua, Yin Ying Ho, Kai Lay Esther Peh, Yi-Chia Chiu, Tuan Zea Tan, Dennis Kappei, Ying Swan Ho, David Shao Peng Tan, Wai Leong Tam & Ruby Yun-Ju Huang ⊠

<u>Communications Biology</u> 6, Article number: 660 (2023) Cite this article

#### Article Open access Published: 09 September 2021

#### Differential whole-genome doubling and homologous recombination deficiencies across breast cancer subtypes from the Taiwanese population

Chia-Hsin Wu, Chia-Shan Hsieh, Yo-Cheng Chang, Chi-Cheng Huang, Hsien-Tang Yeh, Ming-Feng Hou, Yuan-Chiang Chung, Shih-Hsin Tu, King-Jen Chang, Amrita Chattopadhyay, Liang-Chuan Lai, Tzu-Pin Lu, Yung-Hua Li, Mong-Hsun Tsai <sup>⊠</sup> & Eric Y. Chuang <sup>⊠</sup>

Communications Biology 4, Article number: 1052 (2021) Cite this article

## **Editorial Team: Communications Biology**



#### London 🚟



Christina Karlsson-Rosenthal Chief Editor (London) Cell & molecular biology, cancer



Manuel Breuer Deputy Editor (London) *Cell & developmental biology* 



Luke Grinham Senior Editor (London) Evolution, paleobiology, zoology



Dario Ummarino Senior Editor (London) Cell biology, cardiovascular biology



Laura Rodríguez Pérez Associate Editor (London) Biochemistry, structural biology

#### New York 🏴



George Inglis Senior Editor (NYC) Genetics, genomics, neuroscience, microbiology



David Favero Associate Editor (NYC) Plants, molecular biology



Benjamin Bessières Associate Editor (NYC) Neuroscience



João de Sousa Valente Associate Editor (Madrid) Neuroscience, physiology, metabolism



**Ophelia Bu** Associate Editor (Shanghai) *Biophysics, biotechnology, tissue modeling* 



Mengtan Xing Associate Editor (Shanghai) Molecular biology, cancer





Tobias Goris Associate Editor (Berlin) Microbiology, -omics



Johannes Stortz Associate Editor (Berlin) *Cell biology, cancer, biology* 



Huijuan Guo Consulting Editor (Berlin) Structural biology, biochemistry



## **Collaborative editorial model**

## Editorial Board Members are active researchers recognized as experts in their field

- Our Editorial Board Members work closely with the in-house editors to ensure that all manuscripts are subject to the same editorial standards and journal policies.
- They handle manuscripts within their areas of expertise, overseeing all aspects of the peer review process from submission to acceptance.
- Advise on journal policy and priorities, including collections

## Interested in joining the *Communications Biology* editorial board? Let us know!

Learn more: <u>https://www.nature.com/commsbio/editorial-board</u>



Ruby Huang National Taiwan University



Chien-Yu Chen National Taiwan University

# **Overview of the Publishing Process**

# 3.0

## Finding the best fit



## **The Editorial Process**



## Initial editorial evaluation at Nature Portfolio journals

#### Submission Editorial Review Revise Revise Revise Revise Revise Revise Revise Rejections Appeals Transfers

#### Your editor will guide you through the editorial process

- The editor **reads the full manuscript** to determine whether it is potentially suitable for the journal.
- **The editor decides** whether to send the paper to peer review, in consultation with other editors on the team.
- **Timeliness is a priority**: we aim for initial decisions within a week.





## Initial editorial evaluation at Nature Portfolio journals



#### Cover letters are important

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#### What's in your cover letter?

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## Initial editorial evaluation at Nature Portfolio journals



#### Cover letters are important

- Explain why your research is important.
- Clearly state the advance of your research over previous work. Be specific!
- Be direct and succinct (bullet points are encouraged)
- If a similar paper has been published **tell us what's new**.
- You can suggest or exclude reviewers
- Avoid restating the Abstract or Introduction





## What papers do we send out to peer review?



#### Criteria

- (1) Relevance to the journal's readership
- (2) Significance of the findings
- (3) Strong support for conclusions

#### A strong contender for review...

- (1) Addresses an important question for the field or provides a useful technical advance
- (2) Tells us something **new** and interesting
- (3) Presents strong, well-controlled data
- (4) Rules out alternative explanations to arrive at definitive conclusions
- (5) Includes benchmarking for new methods

## **Reasons for rejecting without peer review**



- Topic is out of the journal's scope
- Similar findings have been published or recently accepted
- Key conclusions lack direct experimental support
- Essential criteria specific for the journal or field are missing
- There are serious ethical concerns



## **Peer Review**



#### A good peer reviewer has:

- Technical expertise and knowledge of the field
- A fair and constructive attitude
- No conflicts of interest
- Good attention to detail
- A big picture view
- Familiarity with journal standards

#### **Our editors:**

- Seek to increase diversity in the reviewer pool
- Honour author exclusions (within reason)
- Involve as many reviewers as needed (three is standard)
- Are alert to inappropriate reviewer behaviour



## **Recognizing reviewers**

Each month, *Communications Biology* chooses one of our outstanding reviewers to feature as **Reviewer of the Month** 

We select reviewers who have:

- made a significant and positive contribution to the peer review process, regardless of whether the paper was eventually accepted by the journal;
- taken both a broad and detailed view of the paper;
- demonstrated professionalism and compassion in their reviews; and
- provided comments that truly help the authors to improve their work.





January 2024 Suvi Sallinen December 2023 Isaac G-Santoyo



ID

We also offer ORCiD recognition for all peer reviewers, including trainees

## **Reviewer assessment**



#### Editors can (and do) overrule referee requests when appropriate

#### Reviewers evaluate:

- Strength of support for the conclusions
- Data quality
- Experimental design and/or theoretical framework
- Methodological details

#### Reviewers <u>advise</u> on:

- Extent of the scientific advance
- Interest to the field
- Potential impact on future research
- Overlap with previous work

## How our decisions are made



#### Editors, not reviewers, take the ultimate responsibility for decisions

- We don't count votes; we consider arguments
- We make our own decisions and do overrule reviewers, both positive and negative
- We **use our judgment** on which of the reviewer requests are feasible
- We uphold **rigorous standards** for review



## When you are invited to revise



- We believe any major issues can be resolved within six months
- We try to minimize the number of rounds of review
- You should aim to address the major issues, particularly those emphasized by the editor
- The goal of peer review is to improve papers
- When in doubt, consult with your editor
- We can provide guidance, resolve disputes, and overrule any unreasonable reviewer requests



## Addressing the referee reports



#### Make the most of your opportunity to revise

- **Engage thoroughly** with the reviews
- If revision takes longer than the "deadline", it is OK! Just inform the editor.

#### Provide a point-by-point response

- Make your answers distinct from the reviewer comments
  - Reviewer's comment
  - Author's response
- Clearly indicate where you have made the changes within the manuscript.

#### An effective point-by-point response

- Views the critiques as an opportunity for improvements
- Explains why specific points have not been addressed
- Is professional and diplomatic



## Addressing the referee reports



We are grateful to all reviewers for their helpful comments and have improved the manuscript according to the suggestions. We have listed the original comments from the Reviewers in **bold**, and our responses in **red**.

*Reviewer 1, Point #1:* The authors should acknowledge limitation X in their manuscript. Thank you for raising this important point, we have updated the Discussion with the following text (Line 606).

"One weakness of our approach is X..."

## **Reasons for rejecting after peer review**



- The conclusions are **not sufficiently supported**
- There are significant technical concerns
- The interpretation is **ambiguous or flawed**
- The findings are **not sufficiently novel**
- The paper lacks a critical element or control



## **Appeals**



#### We consider appeals in cases where the concerns can be resolved

#### **Reasons to appeal**

- ✓ You have **additional data** that have been identified as essential for the study
- $\checkmark$  There were **factual errors** in the reviews or the editor's comments
- ✓ You have **specific, concrete evidence** of reviewer bias

#### When appealing is not the best choice

- X When there are **subjective disagreements** on novelty or significance
  - → "The Referees are biased! I self-cite because I have published seminal papers in this field."
  - → "We worked really hard on this paper!"
  - → "You're not qualified to make this decision!"

## **Transfers within the Nature Portfolio**



## Portable peer review



## We can transfer reviews to journals outside of Springer Nature

- Portable peer review saves authors time
- It saves reviewers time
- Reviewer identities can be shared if reviewers give permission



## Key takeaways about the editorial process

- Make your **main message (why research is important and new)** clear in the cover letter and paper.
- Your handling editor will guide you through the editorial process.
- We look for **papers with potential**.
- The goal of peer review is to **improve papers**.
- Make the **most of your opportunity** to revise.
- Editors, not referees, **take the ultimate responsibility** for decisions.
- We consider appeals in cases where the **concerns can be resolved**.



## Giving your work the care and attention it deserves



#### Ways we help to enhance the paper:

- Editors ensure that papers meet requirements for transparency and reproducibility
- Copyediting and typesetting improve the final product
- Publishers are responsible for maintaining the version of record in perpetuity, issuing corrections as needed, and providing information to indexing and abstracting services.

#### Ways we promote your publication:

- Publishing on a prominent platform
- Enabling findability
- Press releases
- Social media promotion
- Research highlights
- Author interviews
- Inclusion in special collections

# In case you were wondering...



## **Artificial Intelligence in the Nature Portfolio**

- Large Language Models (LLMs) cannot be listed as authors
  - Use of tools like ChatGPT should be documented in the Methods and/or Acknowledgments
- However, we discourage the use of LLMs in peer review
  - When relevant, LLM usage should be declared in the comments to editors
- Generative AI tools also cannot be used to create figures or videos
  - Rare exceptions on a case-by-case basis (ex. if a piece is explicitly about Al)

Given the rapid development of this field, these policies are subject to change in the future:

https://www.nature.com/nature-portfolio/editorial-policies/ai



# **Summary & Questions**

4.0

## In case you missed it...

Role of sleep deprivation in immune-related disease risk and outcomes



Sergio Garbarino, Paola Lanteri ... Egeria Scoditti Review Article | 18 November 2021

- Editors are there to help you navigate the publication process.
- You deserve the best service possible, so contact the editor if you have any questions!

## Thank you!



george.inglis@us.nature.com







nature.com/commsbio

