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# The Scientific Society Publisher Alliance delivers an important message

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One of the organizers of the newly formed Scientific Society Publisher Alliance (SSPA) recently published an editorial highlighting the advantages of publishing in society journals (Johnston, 2017). As a founding member of this alliance, the American Society for Cell Biology (ASCB) fully embraces this message. Like other society journals, *Molecular Biology of the Cell*, the ASCB's science research journal, has as its only objectives advancing scientific practice and communication.

When journals focus on gaining the most citations to maximize metrics such as Journal Impact Factors, they are not benefiting science. This is mainly because the best science is not always flashy

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science and because some fields of inquiry attract more citations than others. A colleague reported to me that at an editorial board meeting for a journal, the idea was floated that they should publish fewer *Caenorhabditis elegans* papers and more mouse papers because there are more mouse researchers and the work will get more citations. While this example may seem absurd, it actually happened and illustrates the destructive influence that journal metrics have on journals that seek to maximize their profiles instead of simply doing what is best for science communication.

Because they are not for profit, society journals are free from pressures to operate in a manner at odds with their ability to do what is best for science. Moreover, society journals are staffed by volunteer, working scientists whose priority is only to facilitate publication of high-quality science, minimizing the frustration that many authors experience when arbitrary decisions are made to reject papers based on such abstract notions as "conceptual advance." Instead, the focus for society journals is on the questions, "Is it new and is it true?" Importantly, work published in a society journal has the stamp of approval of an editorial board composed of leaders in their field.

Finally, when an author chooses to submit a manuscript to a society journal, not only is the author choosing to have the work evaluated based on the quality of the science alone, leaving judgments about the impact to future generations, but the publication fees collected allow the society to better serve science. This is because these fees allow societies to provide such beneficial services as holding conferences, providing career-mentoring programs, and organizing outreach programs.

## REFERENCE

Johnston M (2017). Why publish in scientific society journals? *Genetics*, <https://doi.org/10.1534/genetics.117.300427>.