# Authors Don't Read and What do you REALLY need at initial submission?

*Heather Blasco*
*Systems Support Services Coordinator*
*J&J Editorial, LLC*

*heather@jjeditorial.com*

# j&j editorial, LLC
## peer review management

## PEER REVIEW MANAGEMENT

We specialize in editorial office management, peer review industry standards, and editorial workflow best practices for scholarly journals.

## COPYEDITING

Our in-house copy editors and proofreaders work as a team to provide clean and well-formatted text to your specifications.

## SYSTEMS SUPPORT

We build, configure, and optimize submission sites to your specifications, and specialize in supporting platform transitions and new editors.

## PRODUCTION

Our production editors build, configure, and execute efficient workflows to ensure high-quality deliverables meet their deadlines.

# Part 1: Authors Don't Read

# How do people read instructions?

▶ Most procedural documents are written to be read in a linear fashion BUT most people do not read them in that manner

▶ K.A. Schriver found people use four kinds of strategies when learning to use new equipment in which they have instructions.

j&j editorial, LLC
peer review management

# How do people read instructions?

▶ **42%** Worked with the equipment concurrently with reading the instructions

▶ **23%** Read the instructions before using the equipment.

▶ **19%** Proceeded with using the equipment without making any reference to the instructions.

▶ **17%** Looked at the instructions in case of doubt, such as when they were not sure how to proceed, when they made some mistake, or when they wanted to confirm their actions.

*Schriver, K.A. Dynamics in Document Design New York: Wiley, 1997.*

# Submit while they read

**42%** Worked with the equipment concurrently with reading the instructions

▶ ADVANTAGE: Editable instructions **throughout** the submission system process

▶ Required submission questions that replace the need for information within the main document

# Read before they submit...

**23%** Read the instructions before starting

▶ Provide the author guidelines document **where** authors will find it.

Journal's website
Society's publications site
Login page of the submission system
Links within the submission system
Attached to the send back to author email

▶ Use graphical elements such as tables to help convey information when possible

| Article type | Description | Abstract structure | Abstract word count | Article structure | Article word count |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Full length articles | Original research and/or clinical studies. Please note, as described in the Instructions for Authors, papers which only present | -Background<br>-Objectives<br>-Study design<br>-Results<br>-Conclusions | 250 | -Background<br>-Objectives<br>-Study design<br>-Results<br>-Discussion | 2,500 |

# Read before they submit...

▶ Provide a checklist of required elements

**Elements Present in Submission Document**

☐ Headword/Title [info]

☐ Author name, affiliation, and e-mail address [info]

☐ Word count [info]

☐ Abstract [info]

☐ Keywords [info]

☐ Main text [info]

▶ Provide a FAQ section or Guidelines in Brief with just essential information and not all the reasoning behind it

# Don't read…

**19%** Proceeded with using the equipment without making any reference to the instructions.

▶ Inevitably, you are going to get email complaints/questions from these people…Nothing you can do about it!

# Read when they need to...

▶ **17%** Looked at the instructions in case of doubt

▶ Make sure required elements an common problem areas for authors are easily searchable in the author guidelines. Use the terminology they will use and that is used in the system system!

▶ Provide a structure within the guidelines that enables users to jump to the right section more easily, such as clickable links and subheadings.

▶ Reinforce the requirements at the right stages of the submission process so that if they get stuck trying to add keywords, the instructions at the top of the page tell them the rules and they don't have to go to another document to answer their question.

# Part 2: **What do you REALLY need at initial submission?**
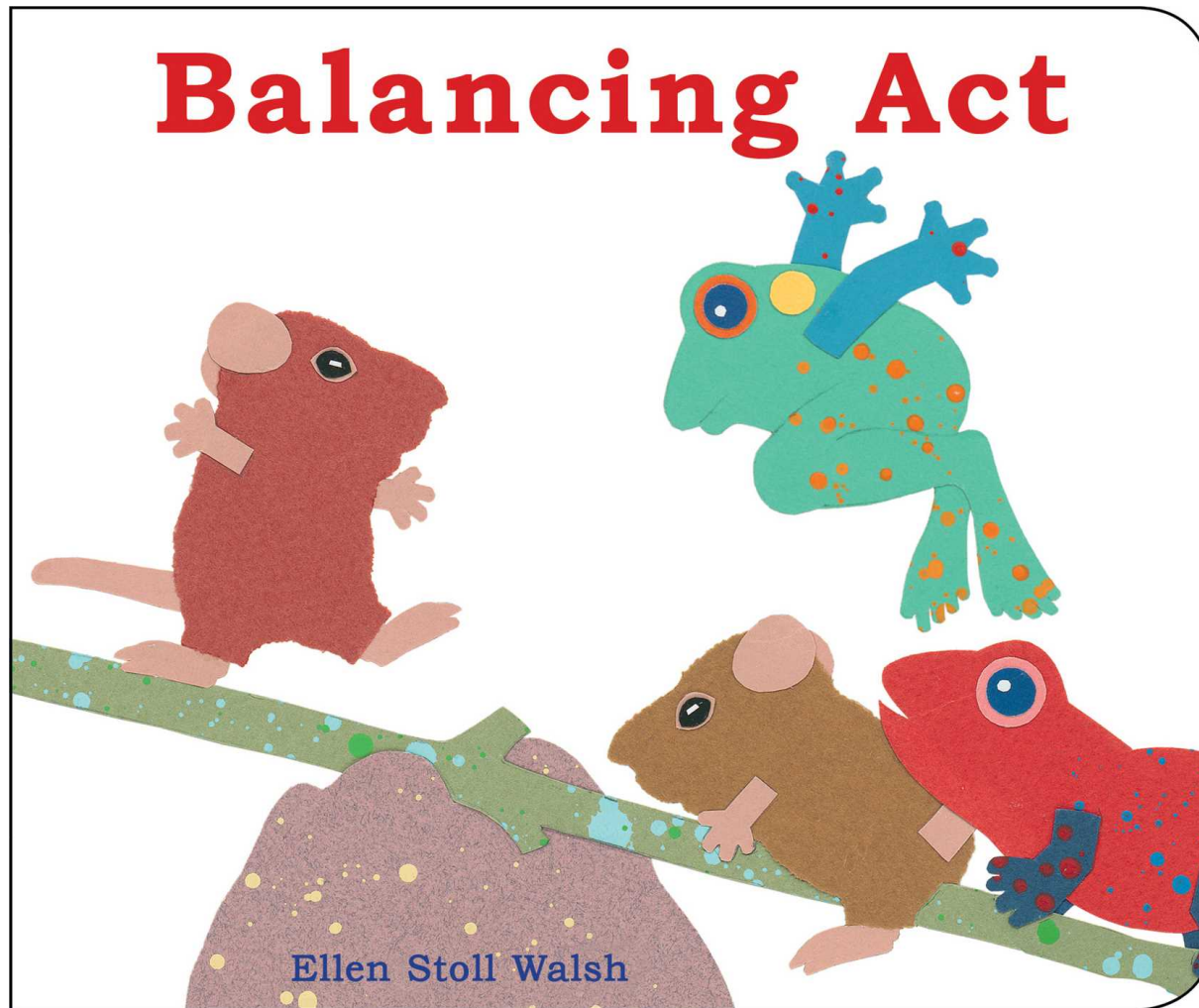
# Editorial office's balancing act

- Authors
- Editors
- Reviewers
- Production
- Marketing
- Legal

# Audit your submission process

▶ Go through a submission as an author...think like an author, what do they not see that they SHOULD see?

▶ Have a colleague who may understand peer review/submission processes but not YOUR journal's system go through a submission, what caused them to stumble?

▶ Have someone who knows NOTHING about submission systems go through the process and observe them...ask them to explain why they are clicking where they are, why they are doing what they are doing

▶ Take a look at what you are sending submissions back to authors for most often. Could an instruction be more clear in the submission system? Is that item really necessary at this stage? Does X need to be in the manuscript file if a submission question asks the same thing (or vice versa)?

# Factors to consider

▶ **Rejection Rate:** Do you reject 75 percent of original submissions?

   In other words, **Can it wait until revision?**

▶ **Editor MUST haves:** Must it be formatted in a certain way or the editor won't even look at it? Who is the stickler for word count?

▶ **Requirements for review:** Must the images be of the highest quality to show nuances of the image, or for initial review is a lower quality image fine?

▶ **Production rules:** At initial submission are their needs important? How many initial submissions do you ever accept?

▶ **Marketing:** Do we need to ask for a tweet before we know it will be accepted?

▶ **Legal "stuff":** Are items such as contributor agreements needed now, or can it wait until later?

j&j editorial, LLC
peer review management

*Heather Blasco*
*Systems Support Services Coordinator*
*J&J Editorial, LLC*

*heather@jjeditorial.com*