

Behind the *LRTS* Curtain

Advice for Prospective Authors

Michael Fernandez and Rachel E. Scott

Among the many questions we receive from prospective *LRTS* authors, one of the most common is, “How long will it take for my manuscript to be published?” The concern over timeliness is perfectly understandable. Many of our authors are addressing timely topics and are engaging in a contemporaneous dialogue within the fast-paced world of technical services. Further, many of our authors are on a tenure track within their institution and have the consideration of including an article (or article proof) within their promotion package.

If the reasons for the request are perfectly clear, the response is, unfortunately and inevitably, “It depends.” Depends on a myriad of factors that are consistent within the world of scholarly publishing and, invariably, not within the control of the *LRTS* editors. First and foremost is the peer review process itself. Assigning peer reviewers can take time. Although our Editorial Board is excellent at providing timely and thorough peer review, we take care not to overburden their finite bandwidth with too many peer review assignments. Given the volume of submissions, we regularly reach out to peer reviewers outside of the Editorial Board to lend their knowledge and expertise to the peer review process. To use the terminology of sales reps, these are effectively “cold calls.” And so, many requests go days or even weeks without a response, and may be declined, or just ignored altogether. Assuming a peer reviewer call is accepted, there’s a back and forth to make reviewers aware of our review guidelines and to get them established on the back end of our submission platform. All of this tacks on days, possibly weeks, to the publication pipeline.

The standard timeline for a peer reviewer to complete their review is thirty days. However, the editors are keenly aware and appreciative of reviewers taking on this additional workload, unpaid, in addition to their own busy professional lives. While we ask that reviewers confirm they can complete their review in the thirty-day time frame, we also know that work, life, and federal holidays can intervene and stretch out the timeline to the review’s completion. Being appreciative of the contributions made by our reviewers, the least we can do is offer the grace of a deadline extension.

At this point in the manuscript’s journey, we’re likely well past the thirty-day mark, unless both reviewers turn around their reviews early (possible, but rare!). The peer-reviewed manuscript goes back to the authors to consider the reviewer feedback and make revisions. The extent of the revision is highly variable, but even the most polished submission can be improved following the input of peer reviewers. Here, the authors influence the publication timetable, and again, the variable of “it depends” reappears. The editors have seen manuscripts go six months (or more) before the revised manuscript comes in.

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Again, work, life, et cetera creeps in, and the author(s) may not have the same amount of bandwidth they did when they originally submitted the manuscript. Conversely, the editors have also seen turnaround times of twenty-four hours (or less) with re-submissions. The more polished papers may indeed require only minor revisions, though we may question how much the authors have engaged with the reviewer feedback if we get a revised manuscript back before we've finished our morning coffee.

This is all before we even get into the potential of a second round of peer review (or third, or more). The path to publication for a peer-reviewed manuscript will rarely be described as quick; however, the academic rigor and expert feedback of our peer reviewers is what allows us to continue publishing a high-caliber journal.

In the best case, a publication that goes through one round of peer review, requires minimal revision, and is quickly returned to the editors for any additional revision requests by editorial would already be about two months out from initial submission. If the stars align with our publication schedule (*LRTS* is published quarterly), the accepted manuscript goes out to production services right before the issue deadline. At that point, there's formatting, proofreading, and review of publication proofs—multiple rounds in some cases. The editors appreciate the work of ALA Production, who dependably deliver on time and turn the finalized issue around in a two- to three-month time frame.

Adding it all up, the quickest journey from submission to publication will still be at least four to five months. A more likely estimate is six to eight months. If timeliness is of greater import to the authors than peer review, the editors are happy for them to consider our Communications on Practice (CoP) section, which goes straight to editorial review. CoP pieces can in theory get to publication in under three months. Even there, numerous variables can come into play, and so our TL;DR answer to the question of publication timelines is, and will remain, "It depends."

In this issue, we're pleased to publish pieces initially submitted to *LRTS* between July 9 and September 30, 2025.

Communications on Practice

In "Recommendations for Small Shops: Managing Collection Services in Small Libraries," Kaci Resau and Elizabeth Anne Teaff leverage their experiences managing collections at a variety of smaller libraries to outline major considerations and provide guidance.

Features

Sungmin Park and Yuji Tosaka present "Marking Gender: A Critical Analysis of Gender Representation in Library of Congress Subject Headings." Park and Tosaka analyze the representation of gender across headings for classes of persons within Library of Congress Subject Headings, finding a significantly disproportionate number (91.4 percent, 2,142 terms) of feminine demographic terms. The study offers

clear methodology and a nuanced discussion of the normalization of male-as-default within Library of Congress Subject Headings.

Notes on Operations

In “Investigating High-Cost Ebooks Purchasing Workflows to Support Course Reserves,” Kerri Goergen-Doll and Taylor Ralph report on a three-year study conducted at Oregon State University that analyzed the usage of high-cost ebooks purchased by the library. The authors found that the number of titles purchased and the overall costs for these materials were relatively low, but their usage was higher than most other ebooks. These findings empowered the library to remove steps from their approval process, streamlining the acquisitions workflow and improving students’ timely access to these texts.

Book Reviews

Books reviewed include *The Organization of Information*, Fifth Edition by Daniel N. Joudrey, assisted by Emily Baldoni, and *Neal-Schuman Library Technology Companion: A Basic Guide for Library Staff*, Seventh Edition by Robin Hastings.