

**Summary of WREN Breakfast Panel
AREUEA National Meetings
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Participants:

Stephanie Moulton (Co-Editor, Journal of Policy Analysis and Management)

Eva Steiner (Co-Editor, Real Estate Economics)

Siqi Zheng (Co-Editor, Journal of Regional Science).

Brent Ambrose (Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Real Estate Finance and Economics)

Moderator:

Sonia Gilbukh (Zicklin School of Business, Baruch College, CUNY)

Describe your journey as a journal editor

Ways to become an editor:

-get asked/approached by editors to join

-background or expertise often makes you appealing for an editorship at certain journals depending on the expertise of the other editors and the types of articles they tend to get.

-do a lot of referee reports and get noticed by editors

-form a team (people you can work with, to cover different disciplines) and approached the journal to be an editorial team

-if you are interested in an editorship, doing good reviews as a referee is the best way to start

-“solid reviews are noticed”

-experience as an author was helpful for being an editor: it gave insight into what kind of feedback was useful, and how to interpret referee reports

Emerging topics or trends that journals are looking at:

-real estate central to many important topics: climate, affordability, mobility, change in organization of cities due to work-life pattern changes

-role of state/local/federal policy, how we are structuring public programs to address these emerging challenges (e.g., climate)

-AI/technology: how will this affect RE markets?

-regional connections

-want to see more papers about other regions/continents (e.g., Asia, Europe)

- policy relevant work

-work on something that interests you!

Advice for prepping manuscript for submission

-know where you'll target the paper—make sure that's reflected in the structure and framing of paper

- work to understand the readership and the journal expectations, frame the paper accordingly

-good communication, clear writing is very important

-good abstract and introduction

-spend a lot of time on Introduction: it conveys what paper is about

- write well!: keep sentences short; use intuitive and concise words
- keep in mind that you are writing for someone who has not seen the article before

- want a good story that is really well communicated
- be careful about AI: it's very clear when something is written by ChatGPT
 - use AI to help with writing, not to replace it
 - journals are becoming sensitive to AI usage (and abuse)
 - speak in your own voice

What is the process of review/intake?

Journal of Regional Science:

- 5 co-editors participate in decision to move to review (articles are allocated)
- desk reject half of submissions because they are: not a good fit, not at bar of quality, redundant with existing research
- need to select reviewers: this can be challenging
- the editors rely on reviewers' comments to make decisions

Journal of Policy Analysis and Management:

- first decision: desk reject or go forward (as much as 1/2 get desk rejected)
- fit is very important: this is why the introduction is important, it makes story clear
- then article gets sent to a co-editor based on area of expertise: can be desk rejected at that point too
- then article is sent out for reviewers:
 - want expert on topic
 - always look at who is being cited
 - want methods expert
 - journal pinch hitters (usually on the editorial board) who know what the journal is looking for

Real Estate Economics:

- 4 co-editors at REE; managing editor first receives and conducts intake review
 - if paper seems appropriate for journal → assigned to co-editors
 - paper assigned to co-editors by subject expertise
 - can request certain co-editor to oversee paper in cover letter
 - managing editor and co-editor can desk reject
 - desk rejection: relevance for journal is most common reason; are the insights novel?
 - easy way to get a sense of relevance: how many papers are you citing from that journal
 - make sure you're telling readers what your contribution is up front
 - selection of referees: try to balance theoretical and empirical perspectives, subject matter expertise, include policy expertise where relevant
 - when referee reports come back:
 - look to see if reports contradict each other → role of editor to reconcile conflicts
 - editor needs to guide authors to feasible revisions if referees are open ended
- Need decisions to be transparent and easy to understand

Be mindful of everyone's time

Journal of Real Estate Finance and Economics:

- get 400 manuscripts a year
- as managing editor: does desk reject
 - if obviously not in field
 - if obviously a consulting report
 - if writing is not understandable
- looking for placement in field: which papers are being cited and are they in relevant field/journals (good signal if paper is right fit for journal)
- passed to editors, who can also desk reject
- editors chosen based on area of expertise and workload
- have another editor that does another check to confirm if paper should be reviewed or desk rejected: screening tool (a unique role for this specific 6th editor)

Tips on addressing referee comments

- the editor's responsibility is to provide guidance: if you don't feel that it's there, reach out to the editor to ask
- the editor indicates the risk and investment would take to do revision (make it clear if it's a high-risk revision) → up to author to decide if they will do it
- editors want to make sure there is a path to acceptance and need to be clear about it (and whether or not it is achievable)
- editor should be clear that there are some comments that can be ignored
- don't be defensive (to editor or reviewers) → that never works out well! Handle responses with grace.
- editors should try to screen out bad actors in reviews/ reviewers
- In cases where you get dense paragraphs that are hard to interpret—how do you address the 'spirit of the comment?'
 - try to identify something concrete from comment
 - If nothing is concrete, then you need to figure out how to understand the comment (i.e., the issue they are trying to point out and how you can address)
 - Make clear to the editor/referee how you understand the comment and then say how you think you are responding to it
 - you have discretion over how you interpret the otherwise ambiguous comments (but don't be dismissive!)
- take a few days thinking about the comments before start revisions
- it's very important to do a point-by-point response to the comments: be specific about how you address comments or why you can't address them (and why it's not damaging to your paper).
 - it's okay to say you can't address certain comments

Pros and Cons of Publishing Open Access?

- What it is: you pay a big fee and then the article is available for free to anyone in the world
- This is more typical in European institutions
- It's not that important for individual scholars to pay it

- BUT if institution pays for it, then great (many universities are moving in this direction)
- you may not realize your institution has arrangement about open access
- would not recommend paying it on your own
- decisions are not related to open access
- sometimes funders require open access (but can fold it into funding)

Q and A

Q: Are there any stats showing that open access actually increases citations?

A: Don't know!

Q: Any tips on how to target journals?

- A:
- seek advice from senior scholars (especially at your institution)
 - look at citations
 - think about the contribution you want to make: who do you want to engage with for this conversation?
 - ask colleagues who publish a lot
 - think of a strategy for multiple journals (preparing for rejection at the first one)

Q: How itemized should responses be to reviewers' comments?

- A:
- up to you—you can break it up or provide one long response (either way is fine)
 - the editor is moderating exchanges (and can't be too formulaic about responses)

Q: How do you recommend writing up a reply when the revision is beyond the scope of the paper or would take too long?

- A:
- if you need more time to make revisions, then ask editor
 - if item is not doable, then you need to address that in the response
 - even if the revision is not doable, you can respond to how it affects the inferences of current work