Academic publishing at a crossroads

Optimistic about the JGLR's future

BY MARGARET DOCKER

WITH THE COMPLETION of the 50th year of the *Journal of Great Lakes Research* (JGLR) and the start of my tenure as lead editor, it's a good time to look ahead. In many ways, we're at a crossroads in academic publishing. Growing unease with the seemingly asymmetric relationship between the scientific community and for-profit publishers has made authors, reviewers, and associate editors think more critically before entrusting their work or volunteering their time and expertise to a journal. Recognition of potential biases and other weaknesses of the peer review system—not to mention reviewer burnout—is resulting in a call for changes to the review process. However, given the generosity and collegiality that I've witnessed among associate editors, reviewers, and authors, I'm confident that the JGLR will navigate these transitions successfully while maintaining its integrity and quality.

When authors are choosing a journal for their work, there are many things to consider, including its aims and scope, various journal metrics, and ethical factors. The JGLR is the leading publication of scholarship on large lakes of the world, and the advantages of society journals are many (e.g., Why should I submit my article to a scientific society journal?). Among the many reasons why I applied for the JGLR lead editor position was its focus on the community that it serves and knowing that a substantial portion of the open access fees go back to IAGLR to support its numerous awards and scholarships.

There is also a growing recognition that there's more to a journal than its impact factor. The influence of a paper in its field is not the same as a journal's impact factor, and regional or taxon-specific publications can be critical for informing policy and conservation decisions. The value of the JGLR and its multidisciplinary scope to research and policy issues in the Laurentian Great Lakes and other large lakes of the world is significant. This isn't to say that the JGLR will be everyone's choice for all their papers, but I encourage IAGLR members—and others—to consider it. Your manuscript will be in good hands.

Despite reviewer fatigue and service overload, I continue to be impressed and appreciative of the largely unseen labor that JGLR reviewers and associate editors generously provide. Despite the many "Reviewer 2" memes out there about the harsh, nitpicky anonymous reviewer, the vast majority of reviewers provide thoughtful and constructive feedback. They are not cavalierly giving a thumbs-up or thumbs-down signal; rather, they are graciously sharing their time and expertise through a genuine desire to help authors improve their papers. Each year, when the JGLR Editor's Awards recognize one reviewer and one associate editor for their "outstanding support of the journal's review process," it's hard to pick just one! The JGLR has always been mindful of the importance of being civil and constructive when providing feedback to authors; looking ahead at ways to further improve, we are among those more explicitly considering how to improve peer review by acknowledging its imperfections.

These considerations include discussing what the JGLR can do to better support authors whose first language is not English, ensuring that editors and reviewers better reflect the demographics of our disciplines, and discussing the pros and cons of double-blind peer review to address potential biases based on authors' country of origin, gender, seniority, or affiliation. As Steven Cooke discusses in creating a collective future for peer review, peer-reviewed journals are more than just vehicles for publishing research; they are communities where colleagues across career stages provide feedback on each other's work. Furthermore, with more outlets for outreach and engagement than ever before (e.g., social media posts, magazines such as this one, and blogs and other opportunities for post-publication commenting), there are many options to enhance interaction among authors and readers. For the JGLR, the ability for authors, readers, reviewers, and editors to meet in person at the annual IAGLR meeting—and celebrate the winners of the various journal and student presentation awards—also greatly enhances this sense of community.

As we enter the second half-century of the JGLR, I welcome feedback from IAGLR members and JGLR authors, reviewers, and readers. I will be holding a "Workshop on Publishing in Peer-Reviewed Journals" at IAGLR 2025, designed especially for students and other early-career researchers, but I encourage anyone to talk with me during the conference. We're always eager to attract new JGLR authors and reviewers (especially early-career scholars), consider areas of interest for special sections, and discuss other hopes for the journal.



Margaret Docker is the lead editor of the *Journal of Great Lakes Research*. She is a professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg.



Journal Highlights

No page charges

Open access at reduced rates for IAGLR members

7–8 weeks average time from submission to first decision

6 issues each year

Organize a special section in the *Journal of Great Lakes Research*

Highlight presentations from a conference session. Solicit contributions around a topic of interest. The possibilities are endless! Submit your proposal for a special section or contact Margaret Docker, lead editor of the journal, at editor@iaglr.org to discuss your ideas.

Special sections coming soon

- Great Lakes Coastal Processes
- Great Lakes Connecting Waters

Special sections recently published

- Lake Superior: Current Conditions, Trends, and Emerging Threats (February 2025)
- Aquatic Resources and Blue Economy Conference (October 2024)
- Speciation in Ancient Lakes 9 (June 2024)

Learn more at iaglr.org/journal