



Writing for Emerald  
Publishing a special issue in an  
Emerald journal

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## What is a special issue?

Most scholarly journals publish special issues from time to time as part of the journal volume offering. Special issues draw together a range of contributions on a given theme and allow for more in-depth treatment of a topic than is normally possible within a single journal issue. Special issues are often, though not always, devoted to investigating emerging or “hot” topics, or to exploring alternative perspectives on familiar themes.

A special issue can be edited by a Guest Editor, a subject expert who is appointed temporarily to the role by the Journal Editor. Most special issues are developed when an academic – who has identified a demand for an issue on a particular subject – approaches a journal Editor to propose an issue.

## Proposing a special issue

Once a need for a special issue has been identified, a proposing Guest Editor should contact the relevant journal Editor and Publisher (this information will be available on the journal homepage) with the following details:

- the scope of the proposed special issue
- an indication of how the scope of the issue fits with the remit of the journal
- evidence of demand for the special issue
- proposed timescale

The Editor and Publisher will consider proposals, taking into account:

- the “fit” of the special issue with the scope of the journal
- whether there is room in the publishing schedule for a special issue. Some journals may have already filled issues for one, or even two volumes in advance, so may not be able to accommodate a special issue.

Where a special issue proposal is not considered suitable for a particular journal, the Editor and Publisher may be able to suggest an alternative Emerald journal.

## Why be a Guest Editor?

Editing special issues allows Guest Editors to gain valuable first-hand experience of editing a publication and is a good trial run for those ambitious to edit their own journal one day. Editing a good special issue may also enhance significantly a Guest Editor’s academic or professional standing among his or her peers.

The key stages of guest editing a special issue for publication in an Emerald journal are discussed below.

## Making a start

The first step in editing a special issue is for the Guest Editor and Journal Editor to agree the scope of the issue, the likely date of publication and the Guest Editor’s final copy deadline. Using this information, the Guest Editor should be able to create a Call for Papers and to draw up a project schedule which allows sufficient time for:

- authors to submit papers
- referees to review contributions
- papers to be returned to authors and revisions made
- the Guest Editor to submit final copy on the due copy date.

At this early stage, it is important that the Guest Editor understands clearly how closely the Journal Editor expects to be involved in decisions on the special issue. Some Journal Editors expect to be involved in editorial decisions on papers – they are ultimately responsible for the editorial content of their journals, after all – whilst others are happy to delegate responsibility for special issues completely to Guest Editors. It is in the Guest Editor’s interests that s/he clarifies the extent of the Journal Editor’s involvement in the special issue at this early stage. Journal Editors should certainly see full versions of manuscripts prior to the copy delivery date but many Editors also wish to see abstracts or full papers throughout the editing process. It is helpful for all involved if the nature and timings of these editorial reviews are agreed before work on the special issue gets underway.

The Guest Editor should also:

- Familiarize him or herself with the journal’s “Author Guidelines”. These are published on the inner back cover of each journal issue and also on the journal’s homepage. These guidelines will indicate the required length of manuscripts and the format in which they should be submitted. These are the standard requirements for the journal and should be adhered to, unless the Guest Editor has agreed different specifications with the Journal Editor and Emerald.
  - Distribute the special issue Call for Papers. Guest Editors should distribute this as widely as possible within their own networks. Emerald too is able to distribute Calls for Papers in many ways and the Guest Editor is advised to work with the journal’s Publisher to achieve this.
  - Take note of the journal’s peer review process. Most Emerald journals employ a double blind peer review process. Special issues are expected to employ a review process of equivalent rigour to that used for standard journal issues. Any change to the journal’s usual peer review process must be agreed with the Journal Editor.
  - Arrange for training in, and access to ScholarOne Manuscripts, the system used to administer the peer review process.
  - Ensure papers do not contain potentially libellous or defamatory material. The Guest Editor is responsible, along with the author and publisher, for ensuring that no article accepted for publication in the special issue contains material which might fall foul of current libel law. It is worth noting that libel law in the UK, where Emerald is based, is generally more restrictive than in other countries.
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## Handling submissions and managing the peer review process

The Guest Editor is responsible for providing clear and timely feedback throughout the editing process to authors who submit papers to the special issue. ScholarOne assists with this. The receipt of manuscripts should be acknowledged and authors should be given an indication of when they will hear of major decisions on their papers.

Special issues can – if a journal receives many submissions – take 12-18 months to come to fruition, which is a long time for an author keen to be published to wait. Guest Editors can make the publishing process less frustrating for authors by keeping in touch and providing feedback on the progress of papers.

Guest Editors are responsible for managing the peer review process for the special issue and whilst the Journal Editor may be able to help in suggesting referees, the Guest Editor is essentially responsible for gathering together a team of suitably expert referees. The peer review process is by far and away the most time-consuming part of the special issue editing process. It is also the most important part of the process as an effective and thorough peer review is essential for ensuring the quality of the papers accepted for publication.

When sending papers out for review, it is helpful for the Guest Editor to provide reviewers with clear instructions on the criteria against which papers should be assessed. This is most easily done by sending referees a review report form. This kind of review report form provides the reviewer with clear guidelines on how to assess the paper and also provides space for anonymous comments which may then be passed back to the author. Guest Editors must ensure that authors address all the concerns raised by referees during the peer review process and modify their papers accordingly. Once authors have completed their revisions, the Guest Editor may choose to return papers to the original referees for a final check but this further stage may be dependent on the time frame for editing the issue.

The peer review process may take up to six months to complete and in some cases, where substantial revisions to papers are required, may be as long as one year.

## Submitting copy for publication

Once papers have been reviewed, revised and accepted for publication, the special issue is almost complete. The Guest Editor will have a few remaining tasks before submitting the special issue copy to the Journal Editor and Emerald and these will invariably include:

- Writing an Editorial or Introduction to the special issue. This may either be a brief overview of the papers to be published or it may be a longer, more thematically-based piece. This latter type of Editorial/Introduction may be published in the journal as an article if 75 per cent or more of its content is devoted to discussion of general themes rather than discussion of the specific articles
- Collecting Copyright Transfer Agreement forms from authors. The Copyright Transfer Agreement form is

an important part of publishing with Emerald. The Copyright Transfer Agreement form assigns copyright to the publisher and gives Emerald the necessary permission to disseminate the article in print, and in electronic form, on a global basis. Emerald will not publish any paper that is not accompanied by a Copyright Transfer Agreement form or some other type of publishing licence agreed between the author and Emerald.

- Checking that final versions of papers are complete, free of errors (to the author's best knowledge) and conform to the journal's housestyle requirements, that full author affiliations and contact details have been supplied, and that the author has provided an electronic version of the paper on disk or as an e-mail attachment.
- Checking that article titles, abstracts and keywords are optimally descriptive, for high-quality metadata. This facilitates search engine optimization.
- Establishing and recording the Received/Revised/Accepted dates for all papers, for submission with the special issue copy.
- Providing a list of the referees involved in reviewing papers for the special issue if it is the journal's style to publish an acknowledgement of referees.

Once all these points have been addressed, the issue is complete and is finally ready for submission to the journal Editor and to Emerald.

## Post-editing and post-publication

After the copy for the special issue is received at Emerald, the journal's Publisher works with the production team to ensure that the issue is published accurately and to schedule. It is at this stage that the Guest Editor, or authors of papers within the issue, may be contacted either by the Publisher or a Quality Assurance Executive with editorial queries.

The publishing process typically takes around 8-12 weeks in total.

Guest Editors usually receive a complimentary copy of their special issue. Further copies of the issue may be available at extra cost or at the discretion of the Publisher but such requests should be discussed in advance with the Publisher. This is because requests for additional copies must be factored in to the print order for the special issue. The Guest Editor should agree the number, cost (if any) and delivery of additional special issues with the journal Publisher prior to publication of the issue.

Emerald seeks to promote and sell special issues as widely as possible. The Call for Papers created by the Guest Editor at the start of the editing process provides valuable information on the special issue and is used by Emerald in its journal marketing activity. Emerald is now looking at ways to sell special issues as e-books, bringing special issues to new markets and new readers.

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## Recent Emerald special issues

### Library Studies

- Twitter data analytics and Semantic search (*Aslib Journal of Information Management*)
- Resource discovery and delivery (*Interlending & Document Supply*)
- Structuring the digital domain (*Library Hi Tech*)
- Integrated information (*Library Review*)
- Strategic library futures (*New Library World*)

### Information and Knowledge Management

- Social media analysis (*International Journal of Web Information Systems*)
- User-centric approaches in the digital information society (*Info*)
- Internet technologies and society (*Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society*)
- Trends in knowledge modelling (*Journal of Knowledge Management*)
- Big data, open data, open source (*Records Management Journal*)

### Education:

- Digital update in higher education (*Campus-wide Information Systems*)
- Social and mobile media and networks in HE (*Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*)
- Liberal education in crisis? (*On the Horizon*)
- Sub-prime scholarship (*Qualitative Research Journal*)
- Assessment, Accountability and Quality (*Quality Assurance in Education*)

### Marketing:

- Internationalization of service firms (*International Marketing Review*)
- Entrepreneurship and service innovation (*Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*)
- New Parents & Children: Consumer Culture (*Young Consumers*)
- Building Trust in Financial Services (*International Journal of Bank Marketing*)
- Kids and Retailing (*International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*)
- Digital Behavioral/Psychological Principles (*Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*)
- Entrepreneurial Marketing Mindfulness (*Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship*)
- Advancing Branding Research (*Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*)

### Human Resources Management:

- HRM in the digital age (*Employee Relations*)
- Managing academic careers (*Career Development International*)
- Sustainability, CSR and HRD (*European Journal of Training and Development*)
- Groups, teams, and conflict management (*International Journal of Conflict Management*)
- Rediscovering collective leadership values (*International Journal of Leadership in Public Services*)
- Responsible management education (*Journal of Management Development*)
- Ethnic privilege and power at work (*Journal of Managerial Psychology*)
- Rhetoric & narratives in management research (*Journal of Organizational Change Management*)
- How the best innovators do it (*Strategy & Leadership*)

Other subject areas are: Accounting and Finance; Economics; Engineering; Health & Social Care; Management Science & Operations; Property Management & Built Environment; Public Policy & Environmental Management; Sociology; Strategy; Tourism & Hospitality; Transport.

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