Welcome and thank you for your support of *PLOS Genetics* and the Open Access movement.

The techniques of genetics and genomics are being applied to a wealth of biological questions and experimental systems. *PLOS Genetics* reflects the full breadth and interdisciplinary nature of this research by publishing outstanding original contributions in all areas of biology. With immediate free access to all content, *PLOS Genetics* provides a unique venue for publishing genetics and genomics research, ensuring that authors reach the widest possible audience.

Since its launch in 2005, *PLOS Genetics* has grown not only in the number of papers published, but also in recognition as a quality publication and community resource. We have every reason to expect that this trend will continue and our team of Associate Editors play an invaluable role in this process.

Associate Editors oversee the peer review process for the journal, including evaluating submissions, selecting reviewers and assessing their comments, and making editorial decisions. Together with fellow Editorial Board members and the *PLOS Genetics* team, Associate Editors uphold journal policies and ethical standards and work to promote the PLOS mission to provide free public access to scientific research.

*PLOS Genetics* is one of a suite of influential journals published by PLOS. Information about the other journals, the PLOS business model, PLOS innovations in scientific publishing, and Open Access copyright and licensure can be found in Appendix IX.

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**PLOS GENETICS EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERSHIP**

Over 150 members of the genetics community serve on the Editorial Board of *PLOS Genetics*, making decisions about whether submitted manuscripts meet the journal’s publication criteria. The editorial process is run as a partnership between a group of academic experts who serve as Associate Editors and the Senior Editors, including the Editors-in-Chief and a team of Section Editors. These individuals are leaders in their fields and represent the full breadth of genetics-related research. A full organizational chart can be found in Appendix VI.

Associate Editors play a key role on the Editorial Board, and are indispensable to the overall publishing process. Currently, there are around 130 Associate Editors serving on the *PLOS Genetics* Editorial Board, and the journal acknowledges their work by publishing the Associate Editor’s name alongside every accepted manuscript.

Although board members are not paid for their efforts, most have found the editorial role to be interesting and rewarding, within the context of a worthwhile mission.

Initial appointments to the Editorial Board are for 3 years. The *PLOS Genetics* Team is on hand to provide guidance and assistance whenever required.

**Getting Started**

- Send us three keywords or phrases that describe your field(s) of expertise.
- Log into the journal’s Editorial Manager manuscript submission system.
- Create a personal profile, including all contact details, classifications of scientific disciplines and keywords.
- Review all information in this Handbook and the *PLOS Genetics* Editorial Board Knowledge Base.
- Contact the *PLOS Genetics* Team with any questions.

**Going Away and/or Unavailable**

In advance of an absence, Associate Editors should email the *PLOS Genetics* Team with the following information:

- Unavailability dates;
- Confirmation on whether they will be able to continue handling your existing assignments.

---

**Our Top Tips for Editing Submissions**

1. **Respond to invitations to edit papers within 24 hours** to enable the timely assessment of all new submissions.
2. Remember to **line up three initial reviewers, with another three set up as alternatives.** This will save you time later on and helps to ensure an efficient review process.
3. **Notify the journal staff of any ethical or data availability concerns** that arise during your assessment of the work; we’re here to help!
4. Conflicting reviewer comments? **Open a discussion with the Section Editor** who invited you to edit the manuscript for advice.
5. Please be sure to **enter your comments to the authors within the decision letter** as comments from the editor. Associate Editors should not act as an additional anonymous peer reviewer, as advised by COPE.
MANUSCRIPT EVALUATION

Associate Editors oversee the peer review process for the journal, including evaluating submissions, selecting reviewers and assessing their comments, and making editorial decisions. This section provides a high-level overview of the steps of this process. Appendix II describes how to complete specific tasks during this process in Editorial Manager, the journal’s manuscript management system.

**Invitation**
- Associate Editors should aim to respond to the initial invitation to handle a manuscript within **24 hours**.

**Independent Evaluation**
- At this stage, an Associate Editor should make an initial decision as to whether a manuscript is suitable for review.
- In 2016, the median time for an Associate Editor to invite reviewers from accepting the invitation was **1 day**.
- The Associate Editor is **not** required to send the manuscript out for review, and can instead submit a Reject Without Review decision.

**External Peer Review**
- Associate Editors are expected to manage the peer review process, soliciting and monitoring reviews.
- We aim to complete the entire review cycle within **35 days** of submission where possible.
- The median duration of the review cycle, from the first reviewer being invited to all reviews being complete, was **24 days** in 2016.

**Decision**
- Associate Editors consider any reviews, and submit their decision and accompanying decision letter for Section Editor.
- The median time for a decision to be submitted from the reviews being completed in 2014 was **3 days**.

**INVITATIONS**

Submitted manuscripts are first reviewed by the Editors-in-Chief or one/two of the Section Editors, who may decide to reject the manuscript or invite an Associate Editor for further review.

Associate Editors may receive invitations to Front Section Articles, such as Reviews, as well as Research Articles. The article type will be specified within the invitation email. Further information about each of these article types can be found in Appendix IV.
When responding to invitations to handle manuscripts, Associate Editors should:

- Aim to respond within 24 hours of receipt.
- Use the links within the email to accept or decline (see Appendix II).
- If declining, provide the reason (e.g., too busy or a competing interest), along with alternative suggestions for Associate or Guest Associate Editors with the appropriate expertise to handle the manuscript.

**Independent Evaluation**

Editorial Board members are responsible for the content of the journal and must fully evaluate each submission throughout the period of their editorial oversight.

After agreeing to handle a new submission, the Associate Editor should conduct an independent assessment to evaluate whether or not the manuscript fits within the journal scope, and is therefore suitable for peer review. Associate Editors should make this initial decision within three days of accepting the invitation.

At this stage, the Associate Editor can:

1. Reject the manuscript without review.
2. Invite reviewers.
3. Open a discussion session with other members of the PLOS Genetics Editorial Board.

To be considered for publication in *PLOS Genetics*, any given manuscript must satisfy the following criteria:

- Originality
- High importance to researchers in the field
- Broad interest to researchers in genetics and genomics
- Rigorous methodology
- Substantial evidence for its conclusions

The full journal scope can be found in Appendix I.

Associate Editors should consider whether a manuscript abides by PLOS editorial and publishing policies, and notify the PLOS Genetics Team if they become aware of a breach of these policies. For instance, Associate Editors should keep in mind whether the authors adhere to standards in their field for data availability, and adhere to all aspects of publication and research ethics. Further guidance on these policies can be found in Appendix V.

Manuscript Evaluation
Associate Editors should carefully evaluate a manuscript before sending it for peer review; about 50% of the submissions *PLOS Genetics* receives are rejected before review. This number is not a target, but a level that is naturally reached. We encourage Associate Editors to judge each manuscript on its merits using the journal’s publication criteria.

**EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW**

If an Associate Editor believes a manuscript to be at or near the level required for *PLOS Genetics*, they should send it out for external peer review within three working days of accepting the invitation.

**Selecting Suitable Reviewers**

The selection of appropriate and responsive reviewers is paramount for the success of a review process judged on its rigor and timeliness.

Any qualified researcher with strong expertise in the topic of the submission can serve as a reviewer. Good reviewers:

- Are usually at postdoctoral level or above.
- Are actively conducting research and publishing work in the field of the manuscript.
- Do not have any competing interests that would bias them either for or against the manuscript.

Associate Editors should consider the sum total of the expertise of all the reviewers invited to ensure that all aspects of the manuscript are fully evaluated.

To identify experts to assess the manuscripts they handle, Associate Editors:

- Apply their knowledge of qualified experts to objectively evaluate the manuscript.
- Search the Internet for related literature; the authors of these papers may be good reviewer candidates.
- Consider the suggested reviewers provided by the author, taking into account potential competing interests between these individuals and the authors. Research shows author-suggested reviewers tend to be less critical in their assessments of the work.
- Search within EM, using the reviewer search tool: “Reviewer Discovery from Pivot”. *Instructions for this tool can be found here.*

In accordance with guidelines set out by COPE, Associate Editors should not act as an additional anonymous peer reviewer.

If an Associate Editor would like to include additional comments, or their own review of the submission, they should include this within the decision letter as comments from the editor.

**Inviting Reviewers**

All contact with potential and engaged reviewers – invitations, reminders, and editorial correspondence - occurs through Editorial Manager (EM). Detailed instructions for working within EM can be found in Appendix II.
After signing in and accessing the “Invite Reviewers” link on the manuscript action links, Associate Editors should extend invitations to three reviewers (‘Inv’), and queue up at least three alternate reviewers (‘Alt’), with the aim of securing three submitted reviews.

Many reviewers will already be listed within EM. In these cases, simply check the email address to make sure it is the correct person and proceed to invite them. To invite reviewers not already in EM, Associate Editors must register the desired reviewer prior to inviting them to review.

Please note reviewers will be automatically uninvited after five days if we’ve received no response. During this time, they will have received two reminders in addition to the initial invitation. We have found that on average, reviewers take 1.3 days to respond (accept or decline) to new invitations.

Alternate reviewers will be invited automatically if one of the original reviewers declines or fails to respond in the allotted time.

**Monitoring the Review Process**

The main focus of the Associate Editor during the review process is to:

- Monitor the reviewers agreed and completed.
- Invite additional reviewers if needed.
- Ensure evaluations are obtained from a collection of reviewers with relevant expertise.
- Evaluate reviews as they are returned to make sure they are appropriate and address the important aspects of the manuscript.
- Notify the PLOS Genetics team of any ethical concerns that arise during the assessment of the work.

The standard review deadline is 10 days. If a reviewer requests an extension:

- The PLOS Genetics Staff will grant extensions of 1-2 weeks at a reviewers’ request.
- For longer extensions, the Associate Editor will also be asked to approve the request.

EM automatically notifies reviewers of their pending assignments, including late reviews. Specifically, they will receive automatic reminders one, four and eight days after the date their review was due. If manuscripts experience delays, the PLOS Genetics Team will contact the Associate Editor with reminders and offers of assistance.
Reminder emails continue until the Associate Editor responds, so prompt replies are appreciated.

**DECISIONS**

Once the expected number of reviews has been received, Associate Editors will receive a notification email. At this point, the Associate Editor can find the manuscript in the “Submissions with Required Reviews Complete” on their Editor Main Menu.

If manuscripts experience delays, the *PLOS Genetics* Team may also email following the receipt of two reviews to see whether the Associate Editor has sufficient comments to proceed with a decision. In this case, the Associate Editor may need to terminate assignments for late reviewers. Please do not terminate open reviewer assignments if the deadline has not yet passed.

*Please be aware that the Associate Editors name will appear alongside the Section Editor’s on all decision letters to the authors. The authors are unaware of the identity of the Associate Editor until the first decision is made.*

**Making a Decision**

On receipt of the expected reviewer comments, Associate Editors should read them carefully and consider all points raised in order to make an informed decision on the submission.

There are several decision types and associated template letters available:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision</th>
<th>Render this decision if:</th>
<th>After the decision is made:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Editor Accept</strong></td>
<td>• The authors have fully addressed all points you and the reviewers raised.</td>
<td>• The manuscript is checked for final formatting requirements and then sent to production for publication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The manuscript is ready to publish.</td>
<td>• The Authors do not have a chance to revise, except for minor formatting changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• There is no need for you to check over the manuscript another time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Associate Editors can include minor requests (e.g. typo corrections) within an accept letter, however, they should explicitly state that no editorial approval is required for these changes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*<em>Minor Revision</em></td>
<td>• The clarity of the presentation needs improvement.</td>
<td>• Authors have 30 days to revise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Upon resubmission, Associate Editors reevaluate the manuscript and author’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- The science is solid and well presented, with the evidence fully supporting all conclusions made.

response to reviewers to decide whether further review is needed or if a final decision can be made.

### Major Revision
- The stated scientific conclusions require additional experiments.
- Fundamental reworking of the presentation is required to ensure the science is sound and fully presented.
- Authors have 60 days to revise.
- Upon resubmission, Associate Editors reevaluate the manuscript and authors’ response to reviewers, and usually return to the previous reviewers.

### Reject* (Before or After Review)
- The manuscript has insurmountable scientific deficits.
- The subject matter is outside the scope of this journal.
- No action required unless authors request an appeal.

### Reject: Accept As-Is in ONE
- The manuscript has undergone peer review and is scientifically sound.
- The subject matter is outside the scope of the journal or does not meet PLOS Genetics’ standards for novelty and impact.
- The manuscript meets the PLOS ONE submission requirements.
- The paper is ready to publish.
- The SE will check the decision and may consult further with the Associate Editor and/or PLOS ONE if they have any concern of the manuscript’s eligibility for PLOS ONE.

### Reject: Accept to ONE with Minor Revisions
- The manuscript has undergone peer review and is scientifically sound.
- The subject matter is outside the scope of the journal or does not meet PLOS Genetics’ criteria for novelty and impact.
- The manuscript meets the requirements for publication in PLOS ONE.
- The clarity of the presentation requires minimal revisions.
- Authors have 3 weeks to revise and accept transfer to PLOS ONE.
- Upon resubmission, Associate Editors reevaluate the manuscript to see if it satisfies the editorial revision requests and is ready for acceptance into ONE.
- The SE will check the decision and may consult further with the Associate Editor and/or PLOS ONE if they have any concern of the manuscript’s eligibility for PLOS ONE.

### Accept to ONE after Minor Revision
- You have previously issued a “Reject: Revise for Accept in ONE” decision.
- The authors have successfully addressed all points you and the reviewers have made.
- The manuscript meets the PLOS ONE submission requirements.
- The paper is ready to publish.
- The SE will check the decision and may consult further with the Associate Editor and/or the PLOS ONE journal team if they have any concern of the manuscript’s eligibility for PLOS ONE.

* If the manuscript requires language editing beyond minor grammatical problems, please notify the journal office.

* An informal exception, used in rare cases, is rejection “with the door left open”. This is formally a rejection but with an acknowledgment that if the authors can fix a fundamental problem we would be willing to consider a new manuscript. Associate Editors can customize the decision letter to this effect.
Submitting a Decision

To submit a decision, Associate Editors should sign in to EM and select the “Submit Editor’s Decision and Comments” link on the manuscript action links. The Associate Editor can then choose their decision type from the drop-down menu, and then proceed to the editable, draft decision letter.

If an Associate Editor decides to reject a submission, they should edit the draft template letter with a brief explanation. Please note that PLOS encourages referrals of Research Articles that are not within the scope for PLOS Genetics and rejected before review to PLOS ONE. If the manuscript is not scientifically sound, the Associate Editor should remove the recommendation to PLOS ONE.

When ready to submit their decision, Associate Editors should click “Submit Decision with Draft Letter” as this will send the decision to the Section Editor for approval. The draft decision letter will always go to the Section Editor for approval before being sent to the author.

Detailed instructions for submitting a decision within EM can be found in Appendix II.

Requirements for Publication in PLOS ONE

Submissions in the following areas are not eligible for transfer to or acceptance in PLOS ONE:

- Non-primary research; e.g., reviews, opinions, study protocols, rebuttals
- Tobacco-funded research

PLOS ONE has specific editorial policies with regards to submissions in the following areas:

- Research using vertebrate animal models in which death is an endpoint
- Clinical trials

For additional information on the Accept to ONE process, see the Quick Reference Guide for Associate Editors and FAQs page on the Knowledge Base.

Resources for Writing Decision Letters

Associate Editors can find tips for writing decision letters as well as sample letter templates in the Editorial Board Knowledge Base.

Uncertain About a Decision?

Utilize the wealth of expertise across the Editorial Board by opening a discussion with:

- The Section Editor (or EiC) on the manuscript.
- Other members of the Editorial Board.
- The Editors-in-Chief for serious scientific or ethical issues.
REVISIONS

Manuscripts returned after minor or major revisions are automatically reassigned to the same Associate Editor. The Associate Editor should then:

- Evaluate the revised manuscript and response to reviewers.
- Determine whether additional external peer review is necessary or a decision can be made.

When manuscripts are resubmitted after Major Revision, we recommend returning the revised work to all or some of the same peer reviewers as before to ensure their concerns have been appropriately addressed by the authors.

To invite reviewers, Associate Editors should follow the same process as for the initial round of reviewers. The letter selection will automatically default to “Reviewer Invitation on Revision.” If for any reason this letter does not appear, you can select it manually from the drop-down menu.

APPEALS ON DECISIONS

*PLOS Genetics* encourages input from all community members regarding editorial and publishing policy. Appeals of manuscript decisions should, however, be:

a) Limited to the specific manuscript in question,

b) Made only by the corresponding author.

Ideally, all appeal correspondence should go through the journal office; if an Associate Editor would like to correspond directly with the authors that is fine but we ask that they keep the journal office (plosgenetics@plos.org) copied in.

All appeal requests are first evaluated by the *PLOS Genetics* Team, who ask the authors to justify their appeal according to our criteria (a “gatekeeping” role). If the authors make a justification, the *PLOS Genetics* Team will open a discussion with the Associate Editor and Section Editor. This discussion post will include the author’s letter at the bottom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appeal Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appeals will only be considered when a) a reviewer or editor is thought to have made a <strong>significant factual error</strong> or b) when his/her objectivity is compromised by a <strong>documented competing interest</strong>, and when a reversal based on either of these grounds would change the original decision.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Associate Editors, along with Section Editor, should consider the appeal and respond to the discussion to confirm whether they would like to accept or reject the appeal. The options at this point are:

a. Reject the appeal

b. Agree to see a new version of the manuscript (the original rejection stands but the author’s appeal that an extensively revised version would be worth seeing)
c. Accept the appeal and allow a normal revision (essentially reevaluating the “reject” decision, making it a “major revision”)

d. Accept the appeal and immediately re-evaluate without revision (e.g. you decide it should be seen by another reviewer, or editor).

If a reject decision is made (the original decision is upheld), the Associate Editor should draft a short paragraph to outline the reasons for this decision. The *PLOS Genetics* Team and senior editors are happy to assist with drafting appeal responses. The journal office will then send the final decision onto the authors.

If an accept decision is made (the original decision is rescinded), the *PLOS Genetics* Team will consult with the editors to determine the appropriate next steps.

Please note that if the authors have cited a competing interest on the part of the Associate/Section Editor as the grounds of the appeal, the *PLOS Genetics* Team will invite the Editors-in-Chief to comment on the appeal instead of the original editor. This is not a reflection on an editor’s editorial judgment, but we have to take this route due to the concerns of authors. Our full policy on competing interests can be found [here](#).

**EDITORIAL SUPPORT**

As Associate Editors handle manuscripts, they may encounter situations where they feel that additional editorial input is needed. We strongly encourage Associate Editors to work with the other members of the *PLOS Genetics* Editorial Board and the journal office in such cases.

**Working with the Editorial Board**

Associate Editors are encouraged to consult with each other and take advantage of the breadth of expertise and experience across the *PLOS Genetics* community. A searchable list of Editorial Board members can be found at: [http://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics/s/editorial-board](http://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics/s/editorial-board)

- For manuscript-specific concerns, communicate with other Editorial Board members via the Editorial Manager “Discussion” function (see Appendix II).
- For general discussions of *PLOS Genetics* policies and procedures, participate in the Editorial Board Knowledge Base discussion forums (see Appendix VII).

**Working with Staff**

If Associate Editors experience any problems or complications handling manuscripts, the *PLOS Genetics* Team are on hand to assist with a broad range of issues, including technical problems with Editorial Manager and dealing with substantive scientific and policy issues for specific manuscripts.

The *PLOS Genetics* Team can be reached either via:

- Telephone: +44 (0)1223 442 823
• Email: plosgenetics@plos.org

Please note that the journal office is based in the UK and the PLOS Genetics Team are therefore only available during UK office hours.
WELCOME TO THE PLOS GENETICS ASSOCIATE EDITOR HANDBOOK

APPENDICES

In the preceding Handbook (pages 1 - 11), we reviewed the Associate Editor’s role, providing an overview of the editorial process from the time the Editor agrees to handle a submission to the final decision, including essential steps and the most important factors to bear in mind. The Handbook can be read chronologically and is designed to provide the fundamental information needed to participate in the peer review process as an Associate Editor.

In the Appendices (pages 12 -58), we’ll go into greater depth on a range of subjects including the PLOS Genetics scope, our editorial and publishing policies, and detailed instructions for the use of Editorial Manager. Unlike the Handbook, the Appendices need not be read in chronological order. Consult appropriate sections when specific questions or issues arise.

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Viewing Submissions and Related Information
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APPENDIX I. THE PLOS GENETICS SCOPE AND PUBLICATION CRITERIA

Genetics and genomics research has grown at a bewildering pace in the past 15 years. The techniques of these fields are being applied to a wealth of biological questions and experimental systems. PLOS Genetics reflects the full breadth and interdisciplinary nature of this research by publishing outstanding original contributions in all areas of biology.

PLOS Genetics publishes human studies, as well as research on model organisms—from mice and flies, to plants and bacteria. Our emphasis is on studies of broad interest that provide significant insight into a biological process or processes. Topics include (but are not limited to) gene discovery and function, population genetics, genome projects, comparative and functional genomics, medical genetics, disease biology, evolution, gene expression, complex traits, chromosome biology, and epigenetics.

To be considered for publication in PLOS Genetics, any given manuscript must satisfy the following criteria:

- Originality
- High importance to researchers in the field
- Broad interest to researchers in genetics and genomics
- Rigorous methodology
- Substantial evidence for its conclusions

For manuscripts that focus on descriptive genomics, the PLOS Genetics editors are generally most enthusiastic about those that also include innovative theoretical treatment or follow-up experimentation that reveals novel and significant biological insight. For work in which disruption of gene function in model organisms plays an important role, compelling evidence of causality and specificity is required, generally supported by germline mutations. Experiments based on alternative approaches, e.g., morpholinos, F0 gene editing, siRNA, or shRNA, are generally not sufficient unless accompanied by rigorous and thorough justification.
APPENDIX II. WORKING WITH EDITORIAL MANAGER

Getting Started

a) Go to: https://www.edmgr.com/pgenetics/default.aspx

b) Use the Editor Login button to access the tasks for your editor role

c) Click UPDATE MY INFORMATION from the navigation links in the top-left corner of the page to verify the information in your profile is correct.

d) We require a full institutional name, country, phone number and your preferred email address(es).
e) Associate Editors are highly encouraged to select subject areas of expertise by completing the Select Personal Classifications section.

The more specific information we have regarding an Associate Editor's expertise, the more likely it will be that they are invited to the appropriate submission.

i. Click Select Personal Classifications

![Select Personal Classifications](image)

- **Areas of Interest or Expertise**

  Please indicate your areas of expertise using the "Select Personal Classifications" button below. This will ask you to select your disciplines from a pre-defined list. We encourage you to classify yourself at the 'lowest level' of this classification scheme, with as many topics as are relevant to you. It is very important that you classify yourself as fully and accurately as possible as these data are used throughout this system.

  Additionally, you may choose to provide "free text" keywords using the "Edit Personal Keywords" button. Please only add keywords if the classification list mentioned above is insufficient (as this information will not be used by the system in any automated manner).

  When selecting lower level terms, the higher level terms will be selected for you. Please do not remove the higher level terms.

- **Personal Classifications**

  10: Biology and life sciences
  10.190: Genetics
  10.190.70: Epigenetics
  10.190.230: Genetics of disease

- **Personal Keywords**

  (None Defined)

ii. In the new window, use the Search function to identify classification within the PLOS taxonomy to represent your areas of expertise.

iii. Select the tick box next to the relevant classifications and click Add to list these as your personal classifications.
iv. To rank your classifications, click **Submit and Continue to Rankings**

v. On the following page, you can select your experience ranking as **Low**, **Medium** or **High**.

vi. When you’re ready to proceed, click **Submit**

f) Once you have entered all the relevant information, click **Submit** at the bottom of the page to save the additions to the account.

Associate Editors can also add keywords by completing the **Editor Personal Keywords** section. Keywords are useful for covering subject areas not included in the classification taxonomy.

*Keywords should not be used as a substitute to classifications, and all relevant classifications must also be added.*

**Setting Unavailable Dates**

In advance of an absence, Associate Editors should enter their unavailability in EM. To do this:

a) Click **UPDATE MY INFORMATION** from the navigation links in the top-left corner of the page.
b) Scroll down to the **Additional Information** section and click **Unavailable Dates**

![Additional Information](image)

1. **Click Add New Unavailable Date**
2. **Enter the Start Date and End Date**
3. **Within the Reason:** field Associate Editors should specify whether they are available to handle revised submissions.

![Reason Field](image)

4. **Click Submit** and then **Submit** again from the **Update My Information** page.

*See [here](#) for an instructional video.*

The Associate Editor Main Menu

When an Associate Editor signs in they will see their **Associate Editor Main Menu**. From this menu, the Associate Editor can view all their assignments.
Submissions with:
These folders display all submissions assigned to the Associate Editor by the number of reviews received.

Search
**Search Submissions**: From here, the Associate Editors can search submissions using a variety of different criteria including the manuscript number, DOI, title and author name.

Editor ‘To-Do’ List
**My Pending Assignments**: Displays the total number of submissions currently requiring attention from the Associate Editor.

**New Invitations**: This folder contains submissions with open invitations. The Associate Editor can either agree or decline to handle the submission from this folder.

**New Assignments**: This folder contains any submission or revised submissions that are waiting for the Associate Editor’s initial decision. From here, the Associate Editor can either submit a decision or invite reviewers.

**Submissions with Required Reviews Complete**: This folder contains all submission for which the required number of reviews has been submitted. The Associate Editor can access the submission here to submit their decision, or invite additional Reviewers.
Submissions Requiring Additional Reviewers: This folder contains submissions under review that have fewer than the required number of reviewers invited and/or assigned. The standard required number of reviewers is set to three within EM.

Submissions with One or More Late Reviews: This folder contains any submission that has one or more late Reviewers.

Reviews in Progress: Displays the total number of submissions currently under review.

Reviewers Invited – No Response: This folder contains submissions with one or more outstanding Reviewer invitation.

Submissions Under Review: This folder contains any submission that has one or more Reviewers who have agreed to review, but have not yet submitted their review.

Submissions with Decisions
My Assignments with Decision: This folder contains the submissions handled by the Associate Editor on which a decision has been made.

My Assignments with Final Disposition: This folder contains the submissions handled by the Associate Editor, which have had a final disposition set (either accept or reject).

Responding to Invitations
From the Associate Editor Main Menu an Associate Editor may:

a) Click on New Invitations to find a list of all the manuscripts for which they have received an invitation.

b) From the manuscript action links click Yes I will take this Assignment or No I will not take this Assignment to accept or decline the invitation.
i. If an Associate Editor declines an invitation, they should provide the reasons for this on the following screen and click **Submit**.

*See here for an instructional video.*

**Viewing Submissions and Related Information**

Once an Associate Editor agrees to handle a submission, it will appear in the **New Assignments** folder on their **Associate Editor Main Menu**.

To learn about the work:

a) Click **New Assignments** to access the submission.

![Editor 'To-Do' List](image)

b) Click **View Submission** from the manuscript action links.

![Action](image)

i. High-resolution versions of each figure can be accessed by selecting the blue link at the top of the page each figure appears on.

ii. The Supporting Information files and Related Manuscripts (if included) can be access via blue links at the end of the submission file.

c) It is also possible to view the author-submitted files independently through the **File Inventory** action link, which will provide direct links to each component of the submission.

d) Check the Details page by clicking **Details** from the manuscript action links.
Within the **Reviewers** section, Associate Editors can view the Author **Suggested Reviewers** and **Opposed Reviewers**.

By scrolling further down, Associate Editors also have access to the **Additional Information** provided by the authors on submission, including the **Financial Disclosure, Competing Interests, Ethics Statement** and **Data Availability Statement**.

### Initiating a Discussion

Throughout the editorial process, Associate Editors are able to call on their fellow Editorial Board members and the **PLOS Genetics** Team via Editorial Manager’s discussion feature.

To open a new discussion

1. Click **Initiate Discussion** from the manuscript action links.
2. Enter a **Topic** at the top of the page.
3. Enter your discussion message in the field **Initial Comments**.
4. Select the other editors or staff with whom to discuss these comments.
i. Check that the display option is set to **250 results per page** and use Ctrl F in order to easily find editors or staff with whom to discuss these comments.

ii. Check that the participant is **Available during next 7 days** by checking the far right column. This will state **Unavailable** if the participant has entered unavailability dates within EM.

iii. Include a member of the PLOS Genetics Team on the discussion.

e) Once all participants are selected, click **Proceed to Customize Letters**.

f) On this page, Associate Editors have the option to **Customize** the discussion invite if they wish.

Associate Editors should not open a discussion by selecting **Start Discussion Without Sending Letters** as this will mean that their participants are not notified of the discussion.

g) Finally, click **Confirm Selections and Send Letters** to open the discussion.

If there is an existing discussion, Associate Editors can open a new discussion by:

a) Selecting **Discussions** from the manuscript action links.

b) Clicking **Start New Topic**.

c) Following the same procedure as before.

To continue an existing discussion:

a) Selecting **Discussions** from the manuscript action links.

b) Click **View**.
c) To respond to a discussion comment:
   i. Enter comments within the field **Comments** and click **Post**.

   ![Comments field]

   ![Post button]

d) To add new participants:
   i. Click **Add Participants**.
   
   ![Add Participants button]

   ii. Select the other editors or staff with whom to discuss these comments, ticking all the boxes to allow participant access to the manuscript, reviews and draft decision letter.
   
   iii. Once all participants are selected, click **Proceed to Customize Letters**.
   
   iv. Click **Confirm Selections and Send Letters**.

e) To conclude the discussion:
   i. Click **Conclude Discussion**.
   
   ![Conclude Discussion button]

To reopen a discussion:

a) Select **Discussions** from the manuscript action links.

b) Click **View**.

c) Click Re-open Discussion.

   ![Close and Re-open Discussion]

   d) Enter the discussion message in the field **Comments**.
e) Select the other editors or staff with whom to discuss these comments.
   i. Tick all the boxes to allow participant access to the manuscript, reviews and draft decision letter.
   ii. Note that the original participants will not be included and will therefore need to be selected again at this stage.
   iii. Once all participants are selected, click **Proceed to Customize Letters**.
   iv. Click **Confirm Selections and Send Letters**.

**Inviting Reviewers**

If an Associate Editors decides to send a manuscript out for review, they should do so within EM. To invite reviewers, Associate Editors should:

a) Click **Invite Reviewers** from the manuscript action links.

b) Click **Go** under **Reviewer Search**.

c) **Search** for reviewers by current email address (this is the most reliable way of getting an up-to-date profile).
i. List the **Criterion** as **E-mail Address**, the selector as **Contains** and the **Value** as the email address.

ii. To search for multiple reviewers in parallel, put **OR** at the end of the line and fill in the next line for the email address of the next reviewer.

iii. To search by name, list the **Criterion** as **Last Name**, the selector as **Equal to** and the **Value** as the last name, and then on the next line list the **Criterion** as **First Name**, the selector as **Equal to** and the **Value** as the first name.

iv. Searching by **Classification** is not recommended.

d) Select the box in the **Inv.** column to invite a reviewer immediately, or select the box in the **Alt.** column to line up the reviewer as an alternative. Alternate reviewers are automatically invited when someone decline.

e) Having made the selection, Associate Editors can continue to find reviewers using the search fields and EM will remember their previous selections.

f) Having made reviewer selections, click **Proceed**.

g) From the following page, Associate Editors can change the **Letter** selection and **Customize** each letter if they would like to add anything to the default text.

h) Once ready, click **Confirm Selections and Proceed**

- **Letter Selection**
  - Associate Editors will need to change the **Letter** selection for revisions to **Reviewer Invitation on Revision** to ensure reviewers are aware that they have previously reviewed the article for the journal (see **here for an instructional video**).
  - There is also a customized invite that should be used for inviting reviewers to Review Articles, entitled **Invitation for Review Article**.
Finding Reviewers
Pivot is a system originally designed to connect researchers to funding opportunities, meaning it has a broad database of researchers and their specific expertise and fields of interest, as well as previous publications. Editorial Manager (our submission system) makes use of this database to locate researchers in the same field as our manuscripts. This tool is useful for times when the usual group of reviewers for a particular field have been exhausted, or the editor is unfamiliar with current experts in a specific subject.

To find reviewers using Pivot:

a) Select **Invite Reviewers** from the manuscript action links.

b) Under the **Reviewer Search** tab, select **Reviewer Discovery from pivot ProQuest Community of Scholars**

c) Click **Go** to launch the search, which will give a green loading message.

d) The next page returns a list of reviewer candidates from the ProQuest database based on the title, classifications, keywords and abstract of the manuscript. Basic metadata about the scholars are returned.

i. To the right is a link to **View Researcher Profile and Publications**. Clicking this will bring up a new window containing the scholar’s articles, book chapters, grants, conference papers, abstracts and a basic CV as listed in Pivot.
ii. If the reviewer has previously been proxy registered, text above the name will certify it as a **Confirmed EM Match**, and red text below give the date stamp of when they were proxy registered. In such cases, further information regarding the individual can be accessed by selecting their name, and then **View Researcher Profile and Publications** in the top right of the new window.

iii. If the reviewer has a potential EM match (they may have been previously registered in the system), a second row beneath the **“Information from Reviewer Discovery”** will display the **“Possible EM Match”** profile.

   e) To proceed within inviting one of the search results, select the box in the **Inv.** column to invite a reviewer immediately, or select the box in the **Alt.** column to line up the reviewer as an alternative.

   i. If the reviewer has not previously been registered in EM, a pop up in red will notify you that the scholar will be proxy-registered once you proceed.

   f) Clicking **Proceed** will bring up a green box as this process is completed.

   g) Once this is done, you are taken to the normal letters screen, where the specific invitation can be selected and customized as needed.

*See [here](#) for an instructional video.*
Monitoring the Review Process
During the review process, Associate Editors can find further information about the status of the reviews from the Reviewer Selection Summary and Details pages.

Details
Further information about the status of the reviews can be found from the Details page:

a) Select Details from the manuscripts action links.
b) Scroll down to the Reviewers section to find a list of reviewers.
c) From here Associate Editors can view information such as:
   i. The Review Status
   ii. The Date Review Due
   iii. The Elapsed Days

If the PLOS Genetics Team has granted a reviewer extension, they will update the Date Review Due in this section.

Reviewer Selection Summary
The Reviewer Selection Summary provides further information about the reviewer invitation status and the number of expected reviews.

a) Select Invite Reviewers from the manuscript action links.
b) From the top of this page, Associate Editors can alter the number of required reviews from the standard three:
c) Further down, Associate Editors can find the Selected Reviewers. From here they can:

i. View the status of the reviewer invitations.
ii. **Un-assign** agreed reviewers or **Un-invite** reviewers with open invitations.
iii. View the reasons for a reviewer declining, by clicking **Decline Reason**.

iv. Check whether there are any outstanding **Alternate Reviewers**.

**Emailing a reviewer**

If a reviewer is delayed in submitting their review, an email from the Associate Editor can often be more effective than one from the **PLOS Genetics** Team. Associate Editors can email reviewers from EM:

a) Select **Send E-mail** from the manuscript action links.
b) Select **Reviewer Reminder - from Editor** from the drop-down menu and then click **Customize Letter**

![Send Ad Hoc Email](image)

- **Send Ad Hoc Email**

  The journal has pre-configured one or more letters which you may use as a starting point. Select a letter, then click ‘Customize Letter’ to open the letter, insert your comments, and send the letter.

  - **Reviewer Reminder - from Editor**
  - Cancel
  - Customize Letter

- Select the desired recipient(s) from the tick boxes at the top.

![Select Recipient](image)

- **Select the desired recipient(s) from the tick boxes at the top.**

- Enter comments within the draft letter below, retaining the existing merge fields.

![Enter Comments](image)

- **Enter comments within the draft letter below, retaining the existing merge fields.**

- Click **Preview and Send** and then **Send E-Mail**

**Submitting a Decision**

Once the expected reviews have been received, the Associate Editor will be notified via email. Within EM, they can now find the submission within the folder **Submissions with Required Reviews Complete** on their **Associate Editor Main Menu**.

![Editor 'To-Do' List](image)

- **Editor 'To-Do' List**

  - My Pending Assignments (4)
  - New Invitations (0)
  - New Assignments (0)
  - **Submissions with Required Reviews Complete** (1)
  - Submissions Requiring Additional Review (2)
To view the reviews, Associate Editors should:

a) Select **View Reviews and Comments** from the manuscript action links.

b) On this page, the Associate Editor can view the reviewers, their suggested decision and whether any reviews have been uploaded as attachments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reviewer</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reviewer 1</td>
<td>Minor Revision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewer 2</td>
<td>Minor Revision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that reviewer recommendations are for the use of the editor and senior editors only; the authors will see the comments within the review, but not the recommendation itself.

c) To view the reviewer comments, click the suggested decision type for each reviewer individually.

d) The following page shows the review questions and responses.

Note that the system scrubs Microsoft files of metadata automatically, so that it is safe to send these reviews on to the authors without breaking confidentiality.

Once an Associate Editor is ready to make their decision, they can submit this by:

a) Select **Submit Editor's Decision and Comments** from the manuscript action links.
b) Select the Decision from the drop-down menu at the top of this page.
   i. DO NOT enter your comments into the Confidential Comments to Editor or Comments to Author fields.
   ii. The Review Questions and Responses can be found towards the bottom of the page for further review.

c) Click Proceed and then Proceed again

d) This takes you to the editable decision letter. Associate Editors are encouraged to enter the reasons for their decision within this letter.
e) If there are reviewer attachments, check that the **Allow Author Access** box is ticked for the attachment towards the bottom of the page.

f) When ready to submit the decision, click **Submit Decision with Draft Letter.**

![Submit Decision with Draft Letter button](image)

(g) The draft decision will be sent to the Senior Editor’s desktop to review, and the Section Editor or Editor-in-Chief will send it onto the authors.

**Instructional Videos**

A series of short video tutorials to assist Associate Editors in performing these tasks within EM can also be found via the following links:

*Responding to invitations and marking your availability:*

- How to Accept and Decline Invitations and Navigate Action Links
- How to Navigate Action Links in Editorial Manager
- How to Set Unavailability Dates in Editorial Manager

*Peer Review and Decisions:*

- How to initiate discussions in Editorial Manager for *PLOS Genetics* and Comp Bio
- How to Invite a Reviewer to a Manuscript Using the EM Database
- How to Invite Reviewers to a Revised Manuscript
- How to Register and Select a New Reviewer
- How to Invite a Reviewer to a Manuscript Using PIVOT
- How to Submit A Decision for the PLOS Community Journals
APPENDIX III. AN OVERVIEW OF THE PUBLICATION PROCESS

The Publication Process

- Submission
- Internal Checks
- Evaluation by Section Editors
  - Discourage
  - Encourage
- Associate Editor Invited
  - Associate Editor Assigned
- Associate Editor Initial Evaluation
  - Further Consideration
  - Rejected before Peer Review
  - Further Consideration
  - Peer Review Process
  - Associate Editor Evaluates and Submits Decision
  - Section Editor Reviews & Sends Decision
  - Final Decision
  - Reject After Peer Review
  - Reject Before Peer Review
- Section Editor Reviews
  - Final Decision
  - Reject Before Peer Review
- Production Process
  - Ready for publication
  - Accept
Presubmission Inquiry
When authors are unsure whether their work satisfies the basic requirements for publication in *PLOS Genetics*, we are happy to consider Presubmission Inquiries.

Submitting a Presubmission Inquiry enables authors to receive a fast response from a Section Editor as to the suitability of the article for the journal. All the author needs to provide is a cover letter and abstract.

The Section Editor will review the information provided and can then either encourage or discourage the full submission. In some cases, the Section Editor may consult with an Associate Editor via a discussion before making a decision.

Please note an encouraged Presubmission Inquiry does not indicate an obligation to proceed further with the full article.

Submission
All submissions to *PLOS Genetics* first undergo an initial technical check, during which staff consider whether the authors have included all the necessary materials for submission. These checks are currently handled by an external company, who aim to complete them within one day of receipt of the manuscript. Manuscripts that pass this step are then assigned to a Section Editor by the *PLOS Genetics* Team, ready for editorial consideration.

Preprints
*PLOS* encourages authors to post preprints as a way to accelerate the dissemination of research. Authors of manuscripts in biology and the life sciences have the option to concurrently post their manuscript to the bioRxiv preprint server as part of *PLOS Genetics* initial submission.

Editors will be notified via email if handling a manuscript with an associated bioRxiv preprint.

*PLOS Genetics* encourages editors to consider comments and feedback available on the preprint record to inform their editorial decision, and where relevant, editors may incorporate those comments in their editorial feedback to authors.

Editorial Process
Our aim is to provide all authors with an efficient, courteous, and constructive editorial process. To achieve its required level of quality, *PLOS Genetics* is highly selective in the manuscripts that it publishes; rejection rates are high.

To ensure the fairest and most objective decision-making, the editorial process is run as a partnership between a group of academic experts who serve as Associate Editors and the Senior Editors, including the Editors-in-Chief and a team of Section Editors. These individuals are leaders in their fields and represent the full breadth of genetics and genomics.

Initial Evaluation
Submitted manuscripts are first reviewed by one of the Editor-in-Chiefs or Section Editors, who may decide to reject the paper or send it on to an Associate Editor for further review. The *PLOS Genetics* Team have weekly calls with the Section Editors for each section. During this call, the team go over new submissions for the week.
and make an initial decision about whether to reject the manuscript, invite an Associate Editor or discuss the manuscript with other members of the Editorial Board. This is also an opportunity for the Section Editors to discuss any ongoing issues on manuscripts, including those that have encountered delays.

The Associate Editor is most often a member of the PLOS Genetics Editorial Board, but occasionally a guest of the Editorial Board is invited to serve in this capacity. The Associate Editor evaluates the paper and decides whether it describes a sufficient body of work to support a major advance in a particular field. If so, the paper is sent out for external peer review.

Peer Review Process
If the manuscript is sent for external review, the Associate Editor must then identify and invite suitable reviewers, monitor the review process, and evaluate the reviews when they are submitted to determine when it is time to make a decision.

The selection of appropriate and responsive reviewers is paramount for the success of the review process. Reviewer choices for a particular manuscript are based on many factors, including expertise, reputation, specific recommendations of authors and other Editorial Board members, and the Associate Editor’s own knowledge of a reviewer’s past performance.

The reviewers will be asked to assess the technical and scientific merits of the work. Associate Editors work to secure three reviewers, however, if they have sufficient comments having received two reviews they may proceed with a decision.

Decisions
Once the reviews have been received and considered by the Associate Editor, they will submit their decision, along with a draft decision letter, to the Section Editor for approval. The Section Editor will then send this decision letter to the corresponding author. The decision will be within one of the following categories:

- Reject
- Major revision
- Minor revision
- Accept

The Associate Editors name will appear alongside the Section Editors name on all decision letters to the author. The authors are unaware of the identity of the Associate Editor until the first decision is made.

Revisions
If a minor or major revision decision is selected, the authors will have 30 or 60 days to revise their manuscript respectively.

On resubmission, the PLOS Genetics Team will perform a series of in-depth technical checks, considering issues such as:

- Ethical requirements
• Potential copyright and data availability issues
• The financial disclosure and competing interest statement

Manuscripts that pass this step are then assigned directly back to the Associate Editor ready for further editorial consideration. The cycle of manuscript review and revision will then continue until the manuscript is accepted or rejected.

Production and Publication

Before formal acceptance of the article for publication, the manuscript and all related files will be checked by PLOS staff for a final quality control check, to ensure that they comply with all essential formatting and manuscript preparation requirements. These checks are currently handled by an external company, who may send requests to authors to reformat their manuscripts to address issues including data availability, figure quality, table formatting, and equation and algorithm formatting.

Once formally accepted, the authors’ files are transferred into our production system and will be carefully tagged to generate XML and PDF files. Manuscripts will not be subject to detailed copyediting, however, *PLOS Genetics* authors will have the opportunity to proof the PDF files.

*PLOS Genetics* will publish an early version of the manuscript in advance of the final article at the same time that the author receives the proof. The date the early version is posted will be the article’s publication date and the final version will be published with the same URL and DOI.

*PLOS Genetics* publishes on a daily basis at 11am PST/2pm EST. Our articles are archived in PubMed Central, usually within about 48-72 hours.

Post-Publication Activity

Post-Publication Discussion

We encourage post-publication discussion at *PLOS Genetics*. Editors and readers should feel free to post a comment and share their thoughts about the strengths and weaknesses of the paper.

Associate Editors can initiate a discussion on a paper by signing into the *PLOS Genetics* publication website (which is independent of the journal submission system), and adding a comment via the Comments tab on the article page. Comments from the paper’s Associate Editors help to promote reader participation and can add critical insight and interpretation to the published paper.

We also appreciate tweets (follow us @PLOSGenetics) and blog posts.

Members of the *PLOS Genetics* Team take it on turn to tweet for a week on recently published manuscripts, PLOS and Open Access news, and much more. We encourage our actively tweeting Editorial Board members to keep an eye out for these!
The team are also active on PLOS Biologue, the community blog from PLOS Biology, PLOS Genetics and PLOS Computational Biology.

Corrections
In some cases, errors or concerns about misconduct arises after publication. Such issues may come to the attention of the PLOS Genetics Team via the authors, a member of the Editorial Board, or readers through various mediums, including email and the online commenting system.

PLOS Genetics staff individually evaluate each case to determine the type of correction based on the nature of the error and consider how it would best be corrected on the PLOS journal website as well as in the external archives and databases with which PLOS shares records (e.g., PubMed Central and PubMed/MEDLINE). If a requested correction might affect (or appear to affect) the results of a manuscript, the PLOS Genetics Team will consult the editors who handled the paper for their advice on the severity of the error and how to proceed.

Corrections take the following forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>On PLOS site</th>
<th>PubMed, PubMed Central, &amp; MEDLINE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Note</strong></td>
<td>Does not significantly affect scientific understanding of article or publication record</td>
<td>Author submits online comment attached to article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publisher’s Note</strong></td>
<td>Does not significantly affect scientific understanding of article or publication record (introduced by PLOS)</td>
<td>PLOS submits online comment to article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal Correction</strong></td>
<td>Significantly affects scientific understanding of article and/or publication record</td>
<td>PLOS publishes correction linked to original article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expression of Concern</strong></td>
<td>Cannot clearly determine whether concerns affect scientific understanding of article or indicate potential misconduct</td>
<td>PLOS publishes expression of concern linked to original article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retraction</strong></td>
<td>Overall findings of the article are not reliable, either for genuine error or misconduct</td>
<td>PLOS publishes retraction linked to original article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Republication</strong></td>
<td>Technical error: XML markup, file corruption; Confidential information needs to be removed; Copyrighted material posted in error.</td>
<td>PLOS replaces online and PDF version of the article. PLOS publishes correction linked to original article</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PLOS participates in the CrossMark service, a multi-publisher initiative to provide a standard way for readers to locate the most up-to-date version of an article. The CrossMark logo is displayed both on the HTML and the PDF version of the article. Clicking on the CrossMark logo will tell you if there have been any updates (e.g. corrections, retractions or expression of concern) to the version of the work you are viewing. In addition, formal corrections, expressions of concern, and retractions are published in the PubMed Central archive (PMC) and reflected in the PubMed/MEDLINE databases.
APPENDIX IV. FRONT MATTER

In addition to weekly Research Articles, *PLOS Genetics* also provides a forum for the publication of other article types of broad interest to the genetics and genomics community. The journal’s Front Section is led by the Front Matter Section Editor, Jonathan Flint.

Publication fees do not apply to the article types outlined in this section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Front Matter at PLOS Genetics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Editorial</strong>: Written by the journal’s editors, these occasional pieces can cover announcements, highlights of journal content, position statements, and journal updates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal Comment</strong>: Considered in exceptional circumstances, a Formal Comment is a critique of a specific published article. It must be coherent, concise, well-argued, and meet the <a href="http://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics">Criteria for Publication</a> for <em>PLOS Genetics</em>. Editors may invite a Formal Comment from the authors of the original article in response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perspectives</strong>: These commentaries, which are by invitation only, frame the content and implications of Research Articles published in the journal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reviews</strong>: These succinct, synthetic, well-focused, and engaging Reviews should appeal to a broad genetics readership. The articles include an overview of the existing literature that places the topic within a broader context, but also focus on the future: where is the field going and what exciting developments are expected?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Viewpoints</strong>: These articles serve primarily as a forum for the discussion of controversial, emerging, or topical issues in the field; occasionally, the discussion surrounds a challenge to findings in a published Research Article.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further information about these article types can be found here: [http://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics/s/other-article-types](http://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics/s/other-article-types)

Editorial Process

Editorial

Editorials are written by the Editors-in-Chief and/or other members of the Editorial Board (with the EiCs’ approval). They may be subject to informal discussion and review by other members of the board with relevant expertise prior to publication.

Formal Comments

Potential Formal Comment authors most commonly contact the journal informally, via email, or submit a Presubmission Inquiry via Editorial Manager. Their proposal is considered by the Editors-in-Chief (and possibly other members of the Editorial Board with relevant expertise), and if it is considered suitable, the article will be formally solicited via Editorial Manager. Note that Formal Comments are only considered in exceptional circumstances, and the Formal Comment must meet the journal’s [Criteria for Publication](http://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics). All readers who wish to comment on an article are invited to do so via the more immediate commenting system which allows community evaluation and discourse; not all comments meet the criteria for a Formal Comment. Once solicited, a Formal Comment will undergo editorial evaluation and likely be peer-reviewed. If it is accepted, the journal...
will invite the authors of the original article to write another Formal Comment in response. Both Formal Comments (critique and response) will be published together.

**Perspectives**

Perspectives are commentaries commissioned by members of the Editorial Board in order to place a research article in context, and show its implications for future studies. They are often recommended by reviewers if the subject being discussed is of particular importance, so Associate Editors should keep an eye out for this in the “Comments to Editor” section of the review form.

**If an Associate Editor would like to commission a Perspective:**

- A Perspective can be commissioned if the Research Article is undergoing final revisions, is about to be accepted, or is just accepted. Please be aware that it has to be clear that the Research Article will ultimately be accepted.
- Email the PLOS Genetics Team with some suggestions of possible authors.
- The team will then help get the ball rolling and start sending out invitations.

**Once the first draft is received:**

- The PLOS Genetics Team will initiate a discussion in Editorial Manager with the Associate Editor and Senior Editor once the first draft of the article has been received. Within this message, they will highlight any potential problems, such as word limit or lack of figures.
- The Associate Editor and Senior Editor should respond within the discussion forum to provide their feedback, and can email a marked up copy of the article to the PLOS Genetics Team if needed.
- Once all the feedback has been received, the PLOS Genetics Team will send this onto the authors.

The revision cycle will continue until the Perspective is ready for publication.

We aim to coordinate the two articles to ensure they are published on the same day; this may mean that there is a longer time from acceptance to publication for the Research Article than would be usually expected. The authors of the Research Article are notified of this in advance.

**Reviews and Viewpoints**

Reviews and Viewpoints are solicited by our Reviews Editors, Elizabeth M. C. Fisher, Christine Queitsch and Petra Anne Levin.

The editorial process for these article types takes place in Editorial Manager.

Once the full submission has been received, one of the Reviews Editors will make an initial assessment and if the manuscript warrants further consideration, they will invite an Associate Editor to edit the submission. The article type will be highlighted in the invitation email and the submission will contain a specific cover letter.

---

**Rejecting Before Review**

Associate Editors should **not** immediately reject Reviews or Viewpoints before review.

If a manuscript does not warrant further consideration, Associate Editors should **open a discussion** with the Reviews Editors to discuss the decision before proceeding.
Review and Viewpoint articles are peer-reviewed and the Associate Editor is expected to invite reviewers, manage the review process and make a decision based on the reviews received. When inviting reviewers, the Associate Editor will need to change the letter selection to **Invitation for Review Article**.

Please note that there is a specific draft decision template letter for front matter articles, called **Decision: FM Editorial Accept**. Associate Editors will therefore need to select this decision type by choosing the standard **Accept**, and then selecting **FM Editorial Accept** from the drop-down menu at the top of the template letter when submitting an Accept decision on a Reviews or Viewpoints article.

**Collections**
In order to highlight specific topics, from time to time *PLOS Genetics* has gathered together collections of articles. These can contain both research and front matter articles, although the criteria for inclusion differ between collections.

There are also several cross-journal collections, containing articles from across the suite of PLOS journals, which are managed by the *PLOS Collections Team*.

For a current list of *PLOS Genetics* collections visit our collections page: [http://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics/s/collections](http://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics/s/collections)
APPENDIX V. EDITORIAL AND PUBLISHING POLICIES

This appendix is designed to give an introduction to the *PLOS Genetics* editorial and publishing policies. We highlight specific issues and policies that Associate Editors may regularly encounter.

This is not designed to be a complete guide and Associate Editors are encouraged to review the full list of editorial and publishing policies here: [http://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics/s/editorial-and-publishing-policies](http://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics/s/editorial-and-publishing-policies).

Associate Editors should notify the *PLOS Genetics Team* immediately if they become aware of a breach of an editorial or publishing policy.

Competing Interests

PLOS defines a competing interest (also known as a conflict of interest or COI) as any relationship that interferes with, or could reasonably be perceived as interfering with, the complete and objective presentation, peer review, editorial decision-making, or publication of a manuscript. Competing interests can arise in relationship to an organization or another person. Such relationships may be:

- Professional
- Personal
- Financial

The following are examples of possible competing interest-related breaches of publication ethics:

- An author does not fully declare a competing interest
- A reviewer submits a review for which he or she has a competing interest
- An Associate Editor handles a manuscript for which he or she has a competing interest

Declaring all potential competing interests is a requirement at PLOS and is integral to the transparent reporting of research. Editors and reviewers must declare their own competing interests and if necessary disqualify themselves from involvement in the assessment of a manuscript.

Common reasons for editors and reviewers to recuse themselves from the peer review process may include but are not limited to:

- They work at the same institution or organization as an author, currently or recently
- They collaborate with an author, currently or recently
- They have published with an author during the past 5 years
- They have held grants with an author, currently or recently
- They have a personal relationship with an author that does not allow them to evaluate the manuscript objectively
Associate Editors should consider whether they have a competing interest and if so decline to edit a submission, including the reason for this in their response. If an Associate Editor discovers they have a competing interest whilst evaluating a submission, they should notify the PLOS Genetics Team and recuse themselves.

Associate Editors are also responsible for considering author and reviewer competing interests when making editorial decisions.

The full competing interest policy can be found here: http://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics/s/competing-interests

Reviewer Exclusions

Upon submission of a manuscript, authors are asked whether they wish to exclude any specific academic editors or reviewers from the peer review of their article. We ask that Associate Editors respect these requests so long as this does not interfere with the objective and thorough assessment of the article.

Associate Editors can find a list of any author opposed reviewers by selecting the manuscript action link Invite Reviewers and clicking Author’s Reviewer Preferences. This information can also be found on the Details page of the manuscript.

If evaluation by an opposed reviewer is required, Associate Editors should contact the PLOS Genetics Team prior to inviting this reviewer.

Confidentiality

Editors are required to treat all submitted manuscripts in strict confidence. We expect that editors will not make use of any material or take advantage of any information they gain through the peer review process.

Further information can be found here: http://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics/s/ethical-publishing-practice#loc-confidentiality

Related Manuscritps

When submitting an article, authors are asked to indicate whether a related manuscript is under consideration (or accepted) for publication elsewhere. The PLOS Genetics Team will notify the Section and Associate Editor if there is a related manuscript, and a copy of this should be included within the submission.

When handling submissions with a related manuscript, Associate Editors should ask any reviewers to comment on the overlap between the related manuscripts.

If both papers are under consideration at PLOS Genetics:

- Each manuscript should stand on its own.
- The PLOS Genetics Team encourage related manuscripts to be handled in a coordinated manner, for instance Associate Editors should consider choosing similar reviewers.
- Their fates are, however, not tied, and Associate Editors are at liberty to reject one submission and accept the other.
• The *PLOS Genetics* Team understands that the editorial process for related manuscripts may take longer than is usual.

If an Associate Editor has any questions about the handling of related manuscripts, please contact the *PLOS Genetics* Team. Associate Editors should also alert the journal if they identify duplicate submissions or publications during the review process.

**Publication and Research Ethics**

Maintaining high ethical standards is collaboration between the *PLOS Genetics* Team and Editorial Board, and in many cases the Associate Editor’s expertise and subject area knowledge makes them better suited to identify potential misconduct.

Associate Editors should consider all aspects of publication and research ethics when considering a manuscript for publication.

If an Associate Editor becomes aware of potential problems, they should contact the *PLOS Genetics* Team.

**Publication Ethics**

All PLOS Journals are members of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), abide by its Code of Conduct and aim to adhere to its Best Practice Guidelines. In cases of suspected or alleged misconduct, the *PLOS Genetics* Team will contact the handling editors and Editor-in-Chief, and work with them to resolve the issue following the relevant COPE flowchart.

Further information about our Publication Ethics Policies can be found here: [http://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics/s/ethical-publishing-practice](http://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics/s/ethical-publishing-practice).

**Suspected Plagiarism:**

PLOS has incorporated Similarity Check, powered by iThenticate, into its journal-wide submission system in order to screen submitted content for originality before publication. *PLOS Genetics* screens a subset of articles at the first revision stage. Not all articles are, however, screened and Associate Editors should therefore contact the *PLOS Genetics* Team if they have any concerns.
Assessing Cases of Suspected Plagiarism

If the *PLOS Genetics* Team identifies an issue with a manuscript following the screening process, they will bring this to the attention of the handling editors to ask whether they think the overlap is at a sufficient level to require further action.

The *PLOS Genetics* team will provide a report produced by Similarity Check (or a similar manually-created summary), and will recommend a course of action based on the level and nature of the overlap. We use the following general principles:

- Overlaps in the **Introduction**, and especially in the **Results and/or Discussion**, are most problematic. We ask authors to thoroughly rewrite any overlaps in these sections as well as ensuring that the manuscripts with which they overlap have been properly cited.
- Overlaps in the **Materials and Methods** section are relatively common and often results from lab groups using and restating the same protocols in different manuscripts (that otherwise differ in content). In this case, it is essential that the previously published paper is properly cited. However, we do not usually require rewriting of the text (this can be counter-productive if the same protocol was in fact used). More rarely, large overlaps in this section raise flags about (a) dual publication, i.e. the overlap could be a sign that the manuscript as a whole does not differ significantly from a previously published manuscript, or (b) copyright concerns, if the previously published manuscript was copyrighted under a more restrictive license than PLOS’s (CC-BY) and a significant proportion of the whole manuscript overlaps. If you are concerned about either of these, please raise this with the *PLOS Genetics* Team.

We will ask that you check and approve our course of action. If you have any additional concerns or feel that the suspected plagiarism should be handled differently in that particularly case, we welcome your input. The Team will handle communications with author.

**Please note that COPE has guidelines on text recycling and plagiarism which may be helpful when considering a potential case of plagiarism. This includes a procedure for handling the most serious cases where disciplinary action may be required.**

*Tips for interpreting the Similarity Check report:*

- In the first section of the PDF, entitled 'Paper text', the abstract and article text are provided, with each instance of overlap with other sources highlighted in a different shade.
- In the second section of the PDF, entitled 'Sources', details the paper’s degree of overlap compared with the various sources. Each source is numbered and coded to match the instances of overlap highlighted in the 'paper text' section.
- We don’t generally find the ‘similarity index’ provided in the top right hand corner of the file to be all that useful; examining the individual instances is a more realistic indicator of the degree of overlap.

Research Ethics

On submission, authors are asked to submit an ethics statement if their study involved human participants, specimens or tissue samples, or vertebrate animals, embryos or tissues. The *PLOS Genetics* Team will check that the statement provided meets the journal requirements during their technical checks. Associate Editors should, however, consider research ethics whilst evaluating a submission and notify the *PLOS Genetics Team* if they identify a problem.

Associate Editors can view an author’s ethics statement from the **Details** page of the manuscript. Authors should also include it at the start of their Methods section.

The PLOS policy on human and animal research can be found here:
Biosecurity and Dual Use Research of Concern
PLOS recognizes that certain research may fall into the category of "dual use research of concern". This is defined by the NSABB as any "biological research with legitimate scientific purpose that may be misused to pose a biologic threat to public health and/or national security." As an Open Access publisher, PLOS remains committed to the widespread dissemination of research while being sensitive to the issues of responsible publication standards. We expect that the potential risks of publishing a scientific paper will outweigh the benefits in only the rarest circumstances. On occasion, PLOS reserves the right to consider manuscript submissions within this context. In addition to the usual scientific scrutiny, such submissions may also be referred to an internal PLOS Dual Use Committee for further deliberation.

When handling a manuscript describing such dual use research of concern, the Associate Editor should contact the PLOS Genetics Team to discuss how to proceed.

Sharing of Data, Materials and Software
Publication at PLOS is conditional upon the agreement of the authors to make freely available any materials and information described in their publication that may be reasonably requested by others.

On submission, authors are asked to complete a Data Availability Statement, which will be included on the published articles, if accepted. Whilst performing their technical checks, the PLOS Genetics Team will check whether a submission meets the journal’s requirements and may request the advice of the Associate Editor as a subject matter expert.

Large-scale datasets should be made available via a public repository, and numerical data that underlies graphs or summary statistics should be provided in spreadsheet form as supporting information.

Associate Editors are encouraged to read the full policy in full, along with its FAQs which cover questions such as “To what data does this policy apply?” and “What are the exceptions to making the data publicly available?”

When evaluating a manuscript, we ask that Associate Editors keep in mind whether the authors adhere to standards in their field for data availability, and whether all materials and information that could be reasonably requested by others has been made freely available. Associate Editors should contact the PLOS Genetics Team if they identify any problems.
Consulting Editors
Consulting Editors play a unique part in the leadership of *PLOS Genetics* and help shape the journal to meet the needs of the scientific community. They are rarely invited to handle papers directly, but rather provide advice on high-level decisions required by the journal.

Editors-in-Chief
The Editors-in-Chief (EiCs) provide overall leadership of the journal and the Editorial Board, and are the main point of contact between the Editorial Board and PLOS. The EiCs have the ultimate responsibility for setting the goals, direction, and contents of the journal. They maintain oversight of editorial operations and hold responsibility for new submissions.

With the support from the *PLOS Genetics* Team, the EiCs are responsible for setting editorial policies at the journal that will ensure timely, constructive, and fair review of papers. In addition, they are responsible for continually identify improvements and innovations that can be made to the journal processes and the editorial scope of the journal.

Section Editors
Section Editors serve as leaders of the journal and help guide both the content and development of the journal in their areas of expertise.

During the editorial process, Section Editors operate at a higher level by evaluating submitted papers, assigning Associate Editors, and then evaluating the decision letters drafted by Associate Editors before they are sent out. Section Editors are also available for consultation at any stage of the peer review process.

The *PLOS Genetics* Editorial Board is separated into 6 sections by subject area:

- Cancer
Research Articles are first assessed by the specific Section Editors associated with these subject areas, before being assigned to an Associate Editor if suitable for further consideration. The Editors-in-Chief perform the initial assessments for articles that fall outside these sections (a large proportion), as well as occasionally assessing articles from within each section.

Front Section Editors
The Front Section Editors are responsible for commissioning and overseeing the submission process for front matter articles at PLOS Genetics. These include Reviews, Perspectives and Viewpoints, and cover a wide range of topics. Suggestions for new articles are welcome, and we invite Editorial Board Members to email the journal team with any ideas you may have. For more information about the different types of front matter published at PLOS Genetics, see Appendix IV in this handbook, or visit http://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics/s/other-article-types.

Topic Pages
Topic Pages are a collaboration between PLOS and Wikipedia, designed to fill important gaps in coverage of computational biology and genetics-related content. The Topic Pages Editor is responsible for recruiting relevant content for publication in both the journal, as the version of record, and on Wikipedia, as a living document. The initiative started on PLOS Computational Biology in 2012, and more information can be found in the announcement blog post.

Associate Editors
PLOS Genetics regularly uses a combination of formal board members and guests to edit papers. Associate Editors oversee the peer review process for the journal, including evaluating submissions, selecting reviewers and assessing their comments, and making editorial decisions.

Preprint Editors
Preprint Editors are responsible for recruiting submissions from preprint servers. There is growing recognition at PLOS Genetics, and more broadly, that preprint servers are playing an increasingly important role in the scientific publishing ecology, with bioRxiv (http://biorxiv.org/) being the most prominent life-science preprint server. At PLOS Genetics, the Preprint Editor team aims to identify strong manuscripts from preprint servers to invite them to submit to the journal. Prior to the invitation being sent, Preprint Editors will consult with relevant members of the Editorial Board to ensure we can guarantee to the authors that their work is within scope and will be reviewed. Associate Editors are also encouraged to contact the journal office with details of any interesting preprint articles they think could be potentially suitable for PLOS Genetics, for discussion with the Preprint Editors.

A complete list of members of the PLOS Genetics Editorial Board can be found on the journal site here.
APPENDIX VII. PLOS PROFILE

Getting Started
A PLOS profile will be set up for you when you join the Editorial Board, unless you already have one under the same email address we have on file. Your login information will be the same for the Editorial Board Knowledge Base, and will be included in your Welcome email along with information on how to select a password.

Once you have a profile and have selected a password, sign in and out of your account by clicking the “sign in/out” link at the top right of any of the journal pages. To update your profile and adjust your preferences, click the Profile at the top right of any journal page or the following link:

https://community.plos.org/account/edit-profile

A PLOS profile allows users to access the different PLOS websites using the same login information. Currently, editors can use their profiles to sign into the password protected portions of the journal websites (http://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics/ for example) and the editor Knowledge Base websites (http://genetics.editors.plos.org/). In the future, we will be expanding the PLOS profile system to include more of the tools we use every day.

Commenting
Associate Editors are encouraged to participate in post-publication discussion by commenting on articles they handled, as well as other articles published in their field.

To submit a comment, click the Post a new comment link on the Comments tab. If you are not signed in to your PLOS Profile, you will be asked to sign in before proceeding.

Email Alerts
To set up alerts for newly published content, click the Profile link at the top right of any of the journal pages and then select Alerts & Notifications. Updates about new content published in all of the PLOS journals may be received weekly or monthly.

It is also possible to conduct an advanced search within any of the journals and save the query to receive alerts for this specific search. Perform an advanced search by clicking the advanced search link below the search bar on any of the journal pages or at the following link:

http://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics/search

When the search is completed, click the Search Alert button on the right side of the screen to set up either a weekly or monthly email alert for new articles that meet the search criteria. These search results are also available as an RSS feed by clicking the RSS button next to the Search Alert button. You can manage all existing search alerts by clicking Alerts & Notifications on the Profile page.
APPENDIX VIII. ORCID

PLOS is committed to Open Science, not only in the research we publish, but in the data and metadata we make available alongside our articles. Accordingly, PLOS requires ORCID iDs for all corresponding authors of new submissions. A unique digital identifier used to disambiguate researchers from one another, ORCID helps ensure that work is properly attributed, and that researchers receive credit for everything they do. ORCiD integrates with other identifiers (e.g., ResearcherID, Scopus, and LinkedIn) and databases (e.g., CrossRef) to centralize research outputs and professional profiles.

While ORCiD is currently only required of authors, we encourage Associate Editors to join in by registering for an ORCiD iD and linking it to their PLOS account in Editorial Manager.

1. On the Editorial Manager sign-in page, click the green “iD” icon to open the ORCiD pop-up window.

2. If Associate Editors already have an ORCiD iD, they should enter their iD number or email and password in the spaces provided. To create a new account, they should choose “Register now” and complete the short registration form.
3. Associate Editors then sign in to Editorial Manager as usual using their existing username and password.
APPENDIX IX. THE PLOS JOURNAL FAMILY

The PLOS Journals
PLOS publishes a suite of influential journals from all areas of science and medicine. Each journal has unique publication criteria and editorial models. In addition to PLOS Genetics, we publish two flagship journals, PLOS Medicine and PLOS Biology, which aim to publish high impact research in their respective fields; three further “community journals”: PLOS Computational Biology, PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases and PLOS Pathogens; and PLOS ONE. The table below highlights the differences between these journals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>ONE</th>
<th>Community journals</th>
<th>Medicine, Biology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Areas covered</td>
<td>All science and medicine</td>
<td>Specific research areas</td>
<td>Broad coverage of respective disciplines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial selection considers impact?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publish articles other than primary research?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional staff editors</td>
<td>Provide assistance to Academic Editors when needed</td>
<td>None; Publication staff support volunteer Editors</td>
<td>Collaborate with volunteer Editors to manage review process and make decisions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transferring Submissions between Journals
Authors may submit work to any PLOS journal, and yet there may be another PLOS journal for which it is more appropriate. For instance, work that is out of the scope of PLOS Biology may be appropriate for PLOS Genetics. Another example might be work that is not considered a significant advance by PLOS Genetics but could be well-suited for PLOS ONE. In such instances, editors can recommend that the authors transfer the work to one of the other PLOS journals. Note, however, that some article types differ between journals and therefore cannot be transferred. In particular, no type of article other than primary research can be considered at PLOS ONE.

If the authors agree to transfer their submission between PLOS journals, they may move forward with a direct transfer, in which the manuscript, along with any reviewer or editor comments, is transferred to the receiving journal for consideration. Note that direct transfers should only be encouraged if the manuscript is technically sound and is being rejected by the original journal because it is out of the journal’s scope or does not have high enough perceived impact. If you would like to recommend this type of transfer to another PLOS journal, please let the journal office know.

Accepting into PLOS ONE vs. Suggesting a Transfer
The aim of the Accept into ONE decisions process is to expedite the publication of rigorous research without the need for additional cycles of review. As such, only manuscripts that have already undergone peer review and describe a study reported to the highest standards are eligible for acceptance into ONE.

Associate Editors may still recommend manuscripts for transfer to PLOS ONE if they are rejected before peer review, but the manuscript’s acceptance into ONE will take place at the discretion of the journal.

For more information on how to use this new process, see the Quick Reference Guide for Associate Editors and the FAQs page on the Knowledge Base.
know whether you would be willing to handle the manuscript there as an Associate Editor, as this helps to ensure an efficient transfer process for authors.

Alternatively, the authors may be advised to first revise their submission based on reviewer and editor feedback before resubmitting to another PLOS journal. They may then submit the revised version to the other journal, along with a response to reviewers, as they would for a typical revision. This revised manuscript will then be reconsidered at the new journal.

The PLOS Business Model
PLOS is a not-for-profit Open Access publisher. Among other things, this descriptor means that all of our content is free to readers. We never charge subscription fees to read our papers. When a manuscript is accepted for publication, authors must pay a publication fee. There is no submission fee. Further information regarding the publication fees for all journals can be found here: https://www.plos.org/publication-fees.

Global Pricing Initiative
PLOS is committed to the widest possible global participation in Open Access publishing. To this end, authors’ research that is funded primarily (50% or more of the work contained within the article) by an institution or organization from eligible low- and middle-income countries will receive partial (group 2 countries) or full (group 1 countries) fee funding paid by the PLOS Global Participation Initiative (GPI).

PLOS Publication Fee Assistance
PLOS believes that lack of funds should not be a barrier to Open Access publication. The PLOS Publication Fee Assistance (PFA) program is intended for authors who are unable to pay all or part of their publication fees and can demonstrate financial need. Authors must apply for Publication Fee Assistance at time of submission through the manuscript system. Further information about the PLOS Publication Fee Assistance Program can be found here: https://www.plos.org/faq#loc-publication-fees-and-fee-assistance

Editorial Independence
All editorial decisions are made completely independently of any financial considerations. None of the authors’ financial information is shared with any editor before, during, or after the peer review process.

Open Access: Copyright and Licenses
PLOS applies the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license to works we publish. This license was developed to facilitate Open Access – namely, free immediate access to, and unrestricted reuse of, original works of all types. Under this license, the authors retain ownership of the copyright for their content but agree to make articles legally available for reuse, without permission or fees, for virtually any purpose. Anyone may copy, distribute or reuse these articles, as long as the author and original source are properly cited. As such, we cannot publish any previously copyrighted materials, with few exceptions.

Papers authored by one or more US government employees are not copyrighted, but are licensed under a CCO Public Domain Dedication, which allows unlimited distribution and reuse of the article for any lawful purpose.

Open Access encompasses a number of issues, including author rights, reader rights, and machine readability. Learn more about the spectrum of Open Access with the “HowOpenIsIt?” pamphlet.
Innovations in Publishing

PLOS aims to develop innovations in scholarly publishing that will improve scientific communication. These efforts are ongoing; a subset of our projects are discussed below.

Post-Publication Interactions

Publishing the article is the beginning of an ongoing conversation about the work. We aim to capture some of that activity through article-level metrics – data about the number of times the article was viewed, downloaded, bookmarked, and shared in various ways – and public comments.

Article-level metrics, or ALMs, offer a mechanism to determine the real significance of an individual article instead of relying on coarser measures like in which journal it was published. Our “Search” feature allows users to filter their results based on certain ALMs. We are constantly working to improve our ALMs by adding new types of usage to track and providing benchmarking measurements that allow users to compare ALMs across different articles more accurately.

Users may post comments on any of our published articles. With this feature, we aim to give readers from around the world a way to communicate about work in their fields and so foster a productive, collaborative space for critical discussion of the literature. Users may post questions for the authors, to which the authors frequently respond, or general comments or feedback about the work. We hope that this public discussion forum about published work will help make scientific communication more effective and efficient.

Rich Citations

Just as the static PDF is no longer sufficient to best represent scientific research outcomes that extend beyond the article, the static reference list at the end of a scholarly article is no longer sufficient to discover the depth of information contained within the network of those references. Rich citations, an advanced form of scholarly reference, carry detailed information about the citing paper, the cited object and the relationship between the two. This improved data format for bibliographic references and the ability to connect references among articles as structured metadata enables enhanced content, machine readability and relational discovery. The PLOS overlay for its articles using rich citation data in turn makes the list of references a research tool in itself. The rich citations open source API is available for interested developers.

PLOS Currents

PLOS Currents is our rapid micropublication platform that aims to minimize the delay between the generation and publication of new research. Authors submit small pieces of work that may be valuable for rapid sharing with the research community, including research in progress, single figures or experiments, protocols, datasets, and negative results. Submissions are peer-reviewed within days of submission and published immediately upon acceptance.

PLOS Currents currently covers six areas:

- **Disasters** (any content relevant to disasters, natural or manmade, local, regional or global)
- **Outbreaks** (all aspects of infectious disease outbreaks with impact or potential impact on human health, including respiratory pathogens and foodborne and travel-related outbreaks)
- Huntington Disease
- Muscular Dystrophy
- Tree of Life *(phylogenetic research that informs our understanding of organismal evolution)*
- Evidence on Genomic Tests
APPENDIX X: FURTHER READING

*PLOS Genetics*: http://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics/

*Journal Information*: http://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics/s/journal-information

*Open Access License*: http://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics/s/licenses-and-copyright

*HowOpenIsIt*: https://www.plos.org/how-open-is-it


*Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)*: http://publicationethics.org/

*PLOS Genetics Editorial Board*: http://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics/s/editorial-board

*Author Guidelines*: http://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics/s/submission-guidelines

*Article-Level Metrics Information*: http://www.plos.org/article-level-metrics

*PLOS Biologue*: http://blogs.plos.org/biologue/

*PLOS Blogs*: http://blogs.plos.org/