

INCREASING EDITORIAL DISCRETION OVER ACCESS TO THE ARCHIVES OF THE PUBLICATIONS OF THE AMERICAN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Whereas, the American Astronomical Society (AAS) charged the Working Group for the Preservation of Astronomical Heritage (WGPAH) with the development of procedures and priorities for the preservation of astronomical records so that they will continue to be available for astronomical and historical research; and

Whereas, the AAS has consolidated its journals under a single Publication Board and applied a uniform Professional and Ethical Standards for AAS Journals to them; and

Whereas, editorial correspondence is invaluable in understanding the development of the science embodied and conveyed by the AAS journals, not only because it documents how the printed record takes shape, but also because rejected contributions can be as important to the history as those that are eventually published; and

Whereas, greater editorial discretion in allowing access to the archives to qualified researchers during the 50-year embargo period is desirable because predicting the nature of such studies is difficult, especially since more restrictive policies in the past may have discouraged requests; and

Whereas, the identities of the referees should continue to be protected in the event access is granted to a qualified researcher before the 50-year embargo period expires; and

Whereas, any publication resulting from access to the journal archives before the 50-year embargo period expires should treat the material revealed with appropriate sensitivity; and

Whereas, the previous editors have had greater flexibility in setting confidentiality guidelines for their publication during their editorship resulting in different rules being applied; and

Whereas, the editorial correspondence associated with individual past editors has been deposited in archives along with their other working papers resulting in different archival access rules being applied to that correspondence, which may be inconsistent with the confidentiality policy of the journal during that editorship; and

Whereas, confusing and more restrictive past confidentiality policies discourage use of some journal archives for historical research; and

Whereas, the AAS has final authority over its publications and their associated policies and can revise them as necessary to serve the Society, to encourage scholarship, and to reflect current best practices; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the WGPAH recommends the AAS amend its confidentiality guidelines contained with the Professional and Ethical Standards for AAS Journals as follows:

Strike

The journals and their editors will not reveal the identities of referees nor the contents of peer-review-related materials to individuals outside of the respective peer-review process for

the purpose of quotation and direct attribution for a minimum period of 50 years. Upon application to the editor in chief, a qualified historian may be granted permission to access manuscripts and peer-review-related materials after a period of 15 years, for the purpose of aggregate studies and dissemination of trends in scientific opinion. The interval applies for individual manuscripts or the last manuscript of a series. The requester must sign an affidavit promising to observe the conditions of confidentiality for individual reviewers; requests for permission for direct use of the material of individual living reviewers before the 50-year expiration will not be granted, except in extraordinary circumstances. Referees are also bound by strict confidentiality; neither the manuscripts nor the contents of referee correspondence may be shared with other parties without written permission from the editor.

Insert,

The journals and their editors will not reveal the identities of referees to individuals outside of the respective peer-review for a minimum period of 50 years. Upon application to the editor in chief, a qualified historian may, at the discretion of the editor in chief, be granted permission to access manuscripts and peer-review-related materials provided that identities of the referees are redacted. Publications based on the use of such materials are expected to conform to normal scholarly practices and require the advance written approval of the editor in chief or the AAS Publications Board.

Referees are also bound by strict confidentiality; neither the manuscripts nor the contents of referee correspondence may be shared with other parties without written permission from the editor.

and,

Resolved, That the WGAH recommends the AAS extend its confidentiality guidelines contained with the Professional and Ethical Standards for AAS Journals to all of its past publications; and

Resolved, That the WGAH recommends the AAS take such steps as are necessary to ensure that institutions holding editorial correspondence related to AAS publications be aware of the confidentiality guidelines; and

Resolved, That the WGAH Chair is directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Executive Committee of the Historical Astronomy Division (HAD) for their consideration; and

Resolved, That the WGAH Chair is directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Chair of the Publications Board and the Director of Publishing for their consideration; and be it further

Resolved, That the WGAH Chair is directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Secretary of AAS for consideration by the Executive Council.

Adopted 03 January 2017 at the Annual Meeting
of the Working Group for the Preservation of Astronomical Heritage
Appaloosa 3, Gaylord Texan Resort & Conference Center