



***Practical Significance* | Episode 29: A 360° View of ASA Journals and Publications with Eric Sampson**

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Donna LaLonde: Well, welcome everyone to the May edition of *Practical Significance*. Ron and I are really excited to have an opportunity to talk with our colleague Eric Sampson. Eric, as many of you may know, is the publication manager for the ASA. And so, we're really looking forward to a conversation about all things publishing for the month of May. And Eric, I'm going to start with a question that I suspect the answer is, there is no typical, but I'm going to ask you to describe what a typical day looks like in the life of the ASA publications manager.

Eric Sampson: Sure. So, I typically start my day off by opening up the email like everybody else and seeing what papers were accepted overnight or at least accepted recently. And then I will go through those recently accepted papers and make sure that we have everything we need from a production standpoint to move forward. And I can send those papers through production and I know for a fact that they will go through smoothly. If I don't have what I need, I ask the authors for it. If I have any other questions, I can ask the editors. That doesn't happen very often. And this is sort of at the very beginning of the publication process for papers that have been accepted. I also look and see whom our many authors or others are having any difficulties. And once I've gone through that, I can start to handle some other things like issue lineups. Do I have any issues coming due or at the back end of things ... I do review

every paper before it goes into final publication. So, I typically have a stack, a virtual stack of proofs to go through.

Donna LaLonde: Actually, Eric, I should have asked you, how long have you been ASA publications manager?

Eric Sampson: Well, I'm going to correct you. It's "journals" manager; just the peer-reviewed ones. So, I was hired by the ASA to be journals manager full-time in 2008. Prior to that, I was a production editor for ASA, both in the office and then as a contractor. And that started a long time ago.

Ron Wasserstein: So how is it Eric that a long time ago or in 2008, whenever you want to start counting, right, but you got into publishing to begin with?

Eric Sampson: I've always loved words. So, I've always written and subsequently been interested in how that gets disseminated. And so, it goes back for me to, when I was writing and also had a paper route and saw how information got to my neighborhood because I took it there and worked on school newsletters, literary magazines in college, and advocacy newsletters. It's something that's been with me for as long as I can recall.

Ron Wasserstein: Thanks Eric. I also delivered newspapers for several years as my first job when I was a youngster. We referred to it as throwing papers. Cause that's in fact what we did indeed, right from the bicycle basket to hopefully the front porch and not the garden. You know, that wasn't too bad of a way to make some money for a 12-year-old.

Eric Sampson: A very good way to make some money. Also, because I can't help it I would take pockets of dog treats. Make even more friends along the way.

Ron Wasserstein: You can't have too many dog friends, especially when you're riding a bike through their neighborhood.

Eric Sampson: Absolutely.

Donna LaLonde: Eric, I also love words and I also like to write. So, I just have to ask, are you doing any of your own writing currently?

Eric Sampson: The short answer is not much. I do a little bit of writing for my local club that I belong to, which is a writing club. But the short answer is not a great deal of writing is happening. That's one of those things I would like to do much more of.

Donna LaLonde: So, Eric, I know that you and the publications committee and colleagues at the publishers and Ron and I, we've been having this conversation of trying to dust off our crystal ball, right? And anticipate what the future's going to look like in the publishing world. And so, I just wonder if based on your experience, and again, you know, looking into that crystal ball, what are the changes that you anticipate and maybe the ones you're most looking forward to, but also fair game, those that have you worried?

Eric Sampson: Right. I'm always tempted to say that my crystal ball is in the shop and therefore not easily accessible. But the nature and fundamentals of academic publishing are simply changing. They started somewhat with the move to fully electronic, fully online publishing, although we do still send out some physical journals. And now of course the question is open access and how do we maintain the

quality journals that our members depend on and truly expect while providing the access that they also are starting to expect, which is quite frankly, expensive. So how do we support those in a sustainable way and how do we continue?

Because the journals make up a fraction, but a significant fraction of the ASA's revenue, it supports journals, and revenue supports other ASA activities. Do we need to develop what is essentially a new funding model to continue producing journals of which I am exceedingly proud. But one of the things that I'm proud of about these journals is that for all of our journals, there's no cost to the author to publish with us so that young researchers can get into our biggest titles. Well, all of our titles are big, and all of our titles are important. It's a big deal to publish with the ASA. I'd like to keep it that way and keep it affordable for the authors. But how to do that is kind of an open question right now.

Ron Wasserstein: Oh yes, Eric, that is definitely a challenge. And thank you for sharing a little bit about that with our podcast listeners. While we're going down that road, what other things do you wish more people knew about ASA journals?

Eric Sampson: Our members hopefully by now know what a great deal our journals are ... that they get free online access with their ASA membership, which is one of the most affordable memberships, for such an association in the United States. And here they can go on and have access to all of our ASA-own titles with a single log-on. It's super easy and I hope that they understand and see the value in an ASA membership. I think our journals are not just fundamental to science and fundamental to the association, they're also one of our most important outreach tools that reach beyond just the statistics profession.

Ron Wasserstein: Thanks, Eric. I've got another question for you, but I'm going to ask one before I get to that one that I've been stewing on since you were sharing what your day is like. Can you share, first of all, with our listeners roughly how many articles we publish annually across our suite of journals?

Eric Sampson: Across our suite of journals, we publish about 500 articles a year, roughly. And JASA alone accounts for more than 200. That doesn't include book reviews, letters to the editor, those kinds of things. But easily 500 a year. I started to count pages, but at this point, pages are starting to lose their meaning to many of our users. And remember that those 500-a-year ASA journals typically have between a 10% and 18% acceptance rate. So, there are many, many papers constantly in review by our amazing volunteers that simply will not get published in our journals.

Ron Wasserstein: Well, I was just thinking about this from the standpoint of your reviewing the proofs of every one of those papers. So, counting workdays, that comes out to an average of two papers to proof per day. But of course, they don't come in in a nice smooth fashion like that at all. No. So that's a massive chore. Well, let's focus on authors for a moment because you mentioned that our journals are very popular. They are also difficult to get published in, and authors are looking to figure out where to submit their papers. And how to get their work out. So, as you have sat in this chair for a good long while now, what advice do you have for authors as they're trying to find the right place to attempt to publish their paper?

Eric Sampson: The first thing is always to look at the aims and scopes of the publications that might be the best suited for your paper. Does your paper fit those aims and scopes? Look at the instructions for the authors. You'll find a lot of useful information there, much of it from the editors themselves as they

refine and present and try to help the authors to understand what it is the editors are looking for. That's always the first place to start. If you can reach out to an associate editor, if you see a name on the associate editor list, you might recognize or whose work you have followed and ask if your paper might be a good fit for that particular journal. So many papers are rejected at first submission simply because they don't belong in the journal. They aren't looking at the area of research that the journalist focused on, or the author simply has thrown the paper into the hopper hoping that it gets through. So, it's super important for everybody to look at the aims and scopes and the instructions for the authors. You will find a lot of good information there to direct your submissions.

Donna LaLonde: So, Eric, I also want to follow up on the journals and the correct outlet. And this is more from the perspective of the potential author. If a person thinks, Hey, I could really contribute, I could learn more as well. If I was a reviewer or an associate editor, how does one get into that line of work?

Eric Sampson: I am really glad you asked. Becoming a reviewer for one of the journals is very easy and it just involves creating an account for yourself on the Scholar One manuscript system that the ASA uses for submissions. However, I would say two things about that. First, of course, create the account for yourself because that automatically adds your name to the reviewer list. You can opt out of being a reviewer if you wish, but we would appreciate it if you didn't. Please stay on because we need your help. When you create your account, be as thorough and precise as possible in filling out your keywords and interests, and areas of expertise. That way the associate editors have a better grasp of what papers to send you away for review. When you're asked to review, I'm going to ask one more favor, and that's to be prompt. Be as prompt as you can with your review. We know everybody's busy; we know that this is added work for a volunteer, but you would be amazed at the reviews. I look at just the average review shows such care and real attention to helping these authors make papers better. And if that sounds like you, we would love to have you review once you've created your account and done all those other things. I would encourage you to reach out to an associate editor. You can find those lists online. If you find someone whose name you recognize or even tangentially recognize, reach out and say, "Hey, I want to review papers for JASA. My name is already on the list, here are my areas of expertise. Would love to start seeing some papers." My guess is that you'll be taken up on that.

Donna LaLonde: You said reviewers go the Scholar One ... How about the associate editors and editors for that matter might as well let our audience know the entire process.

Eric Sampson: Associate editors are chosen by the editors and serve at the editor's pleasure. So, if you start to think that these are just the editor's friends, not really, the editor typically is very familiar with the literature in this area, in the area of focus for whatever journal. And the editors are very keen to add associate editors who are skilled in areas that the editor lacks. So the focus for the editor in creating his or her editorial board is to make sure that they have a broad range of areas of expertise that fall within the scope of the journal covered so that when a paper comes in that the editor says, "Oh my gosh, I don't know much about this topic, but I know this person who I've brought on as associate editor knows a lot that paper goes to that person." So again, it's making yourself known to the editor, but also being active in your areas of research and publishing when you can. And fortunately, we are back to having conferences so reach out, and always let the editors and associate editors know you are interested. And again, you can find those lists online.

For editors, the ASA conducts very thorough, very careful editor searches. And those people tend to come from the associate editor ranks within a given journal. The editors are often chosen because they

have already been active in the journal itself, clearly, they know the topic, they know the names and scopes, and they know the focus of the journal or the area of the journal still. We form search committees and put out the word to get as broad a base of applicants as possible. And we found this with several of our journals. The best editors don't always come from there. And we've gotten some amazing editors from even outside the "statistics profession." They are statisticians, trust us, but they come from other areas. So, it's a very painstaking process and our search committees have done an amazing job. But to become an editor, that person has typically already been active with the journal and is clearly known in the field.

Donna LaLonde: Thanks, that's really helpful. So, I think one takeaway from me is, is that when folks see the announcement posted, take that seriously because it really is an active search. It's not a done deal.

Eric Sampson: Oh, it's never a done deal until the ASA board says it's a done deal.

Donna LaLonde: Perfect. Well, I want to switch gears a little bit. And this question has emerged because I need to add to my playlist and reading lists because reading and listening to podcasts are two of my favorite activities. So, what are you reading, listening to, watching any or all of the above?

Eric Sampson: Sure. So, my horse and I have taken a hiatus from competing and heavy training. So, I've gone back to the basics. I'm reading a book called *Centered Riding* by Sally Swift. It's one of the classics of classical equestrian riding. I'm reading *Salt, Acid, Fat, and Heat* because I love to cook. It's not so much a cookbook, it's more of a guide. And I'm rereading *The Hate You Give* by Angie Thomas. For my podcast, I hesitate to say I really like *Risk*, which can be a little on the bawdy side, but it's really fun and the stories are amazing. And other than that, I've been going back to my musical roots and reintroducing myself to some Parliament, which has been a lot of fun. I exercise to Parliament.

Donna LaLonde: That's great. And I would be remiss if I didn't ask the horse's name.

Eric Sampson: There's a longer story there, Donna, so if anybody listening to this podcast wants to, please Google the name Poncho Via and Boyd Martin. My horse named Poncho represented the United States in the PanAm games in 2015 and has a team gold medal. So, Poncho and I have been partners now for a little over four years. And he is an amazing, amazing athlete. A very quirky horse to ride. So, it hasn't always been easy, but, oh my gosh, is he fun.

Donna LaLonde: That's great. And do you anticipate getting back to the competition? Is the hiatus a temporary one?

Eric Sampson: We hope so. We'll see. Again, Poncho has had a very long career. He just turned 20 years old. He has no idea that he is 20 years old. We'll just see what he wants to do. If we do get back to competing, it won't be for too much longer. There's no reason to put his body or necessarily mine sometimes through the strain of heavy competition. He has done more than I could have ever, ever dreamed of. He took me to the American Championships where we placed really well. And, so we're going to let him dictate that. He seems to still have quite a few miles in the tank, so we'll just see.

Donna LaLonde: That's great. Well, now I know all of our listeners are going to be following Poncho's late athletic career. Thanks, Eric. This has just been wonderful to spend some time with you and learn more about the journals. And with that, I am going to turn it over to Ron for the traditional Top 10.

Eric Sampson: Great. This was amazing.

Ron Wasserstein: Thank you, Donna. As statisticians, we like to do things with data. As I was thinking about this the other day, I realized that there are a lot of things that can be done with data. As always, on the *Practical Significance* Podcast, we strive to help our listeners navigate the statistical world. So, this top 10 list is ... if you count carefully, a “Top 10 (Squared) List of Things You Can Do With Data.”

Here we go.

#10 Download it. Upload it. Spool it. Import it. Dump it. Delete it. Fragment it. Encrypt it. Decrypt it. Give it a key.

#09 Network it. Transfer it. Password-protect it. Mask it. Tokenize it. Hack it. Breach it. Leak it.

#08 Bus it. Drive it. Put it in a dashboard.

#07 Explore it. Transform it. Perturb it. Reduce its dimension. Analyze it. Crunch it. Cluster it. Group it. Classify it. Make it longitudinal or make it a time series. Graph it. Visualize it. Chart it. Extrapolate beyond it. Overfit it. Pool it.

#06 Collect it. Gather it. Harvest it. Silo it. Generate it. Mine it. Process it. Format it. Label it. Name it. Enter it. Log it. Propagate it. Host it. Share it. Curate it. Store it. Archive it. Put it in a warehouse or a hub or a bank or a repository or a vault.

#05 Define it. Normalize it. Virtualize it. Tag it. Put in a glossary. Put it in a dictionary. Make a hierarchy of it. Make it more granular. Or less granular.

#04 Back it up. Manipulate, wrangle, clean, munge, scrub, check, purge, or deduplicate it.

#03 Partition it. Slice it. Fuse it. Join it. Harmonize it. Integrate it. Augment it.

#02 Govern it. Manage it. Federate it. Map its flow. Migrate it. Mutate it. Bind it. Question its lineage, provenance, quality, fidelity, integrity, or latency and whether it is actionable.

And the #1 thing you can do with data:

Argue if it is singular or plural.

Well, that's it for this month's episode of *Practical Significance*. Thanks for joining us. We look forward to continuing the conversation next month.