***Practical Significance* | Episode 62: Volume One: A Conversation with the Editors of ASA Discoveries**

Donna LaLonde:
Well, welcome everyone to the February episode of *Practical Significance*. Ron and I are delighted to welcome the ASA *Discoveries* Editorial Board to the podcast. And rather than spending time with formal introductions up front, we're going to jump right into the conversation. When each of the editors answers their first question, they'll briefly share who they are and what they do. This way we can dive into interesting conversations and learn more about this new, exciting open-access journal.

I'm going to get started with Bo and Galin. Bo, let's get the big picture. What gap in the publishing landscape do you think *ASA Discoveries* will play?

Bo Li:
I'm Bo Li. I'm a professor in statistics and data science at Washington University in St. Louis. I'm also the co-director of a transdisciplinary institute in applied data science at WashU, and I'm the editor-in-chief of *ASA Discoveries*.

ASA already has a very strong portfolio of journals, including flagship journals and highly specialized ones. We picture *ASA Discoveries* not as filling a gap in subject matter, but rather a gap in how we accommodate the pace and breadth of modern research.

Our field has expanded dramatically. Statisticians and data scientists produce far more high-quality work than even a decade ago, and at the same time, machine learning and AI are reshaping research in many directions at once.

Innovation is happening across traditional boundaries—between theory and application, statistics and AI, and across domains.

Donna LaLonde:
And now we'll hear from Galin on his view of the role that *ASA Discoveries* is going to play in the publishing landscape.

Galin Jones:
Hi, I'm Galin Jones. I'm a professor of statistics at the University of Minnesota. I'm the director of the School of Statistics and chair of the university's data science and AI hub.

Bo is exactly right—there is a need for what he described. Because of this, we felt there was a need for a new home: a journal that can showcase broad, emerging, and cross-cutting innovations. Papers that may not fit neatly into a single traditional category but may be statistically or scientifically important and forward-looking.

ASA Discoveries is designed to be that home, complementing existing ASA journals by highlighting impactful ideas that reflect where the field is going, not just where it has been.

Donna LaLonde:
All right, continuing to meet the editorial board, we'll go to Sebastien and Abel. If you had to distill the soul of *ASA Discoveries* into a few sentences, what is the core impact you want it to have? Sebastien, we'll start with you.

Sebastien Haneuse:
Thanks, Donna. I'm Sebastien Haneuse. I'm a professor in the Department of Biostatistics at the Harvard Chan School of Public Health, and I also serve as director of the PhD program.

The "soul" is a tricky one, so I'm going to let Abel speak to that directly. But I'll say that the landscape in which statistics, data science, and AI operate is growing and evolving rapidly, and that certainly wasn't lost on any of us.

The impact we're hoping to have is to serve as a venue for publishing high-quality and impactful work at the intersection of these fields. One core ingredient that distinguishes us is that we're fully open access, meaning all published papers will be universally available.

Abel Rodriguez:
Hi, I'm Abel Rodriguez. I'm a professor of statistics at the University of Washington and serve as department chair. Thank you, Ron and Donna, for having us—it's a great opportunity.

We want people to know more about the journal, and this podcast is a great way to do that. Picking up on threads already mentioned, what counts as statistics research is evolving rapidly.

For example, contributions involving infrastructure—benchmark data sets, data repositories, or broadly useful research software—have historically been hard to publish. We hope *ASA Discoveries* will expand the frontier of what counts as statistical research while maintaining rigor and high standards.

These frontier areas need publication standards and defining them is ongoing work. We'll work closely with authors, especially in the early years, to help shape those standards. More broadly, we're open to the journal evolving organically based on community needs and submissions.

Ron Wasserstein:
Thanks. Shujie, tell us what makes *ASA Discoveries* fundamentally different from existing publications. What will readers and authors find here that they can't get somewhere else?

Shujie Ma:
Hello everyone. My name is Shujie Ma. I'm a professor of statistics and currently graduate advisor in the Department of Statistics at the University of California, Riverside. First, thank Ron, Donna, and the ASA for having us here today.

ASA Discoveries is uniquely positioned as a fully open-access, interdisciplinary journal that integrates statistics, data science, and artificial intelligence in a single venue. Unlike traditional journals that emphasize theory or application in isolation, *ASA Discoveries* promotes work that connects methodological innovation with real-world impact.

With 100% open access, all articles are freely available, removing barriers to dissemination and enabling broader societal impact. Articles are published on a rolling basis and can be immediately cited. The journal also emphasizes ethical, transparent, and responsible data science, encouraging authors to address fairness, accountability, and transparency.

In addition to original research, *ASA Discoveries* publishes high-quality review articles to support continuous learning for researchers, practitioners, and students.

Ron Wasserstein:
Thank you, Shujie, and now we've met the whole team. Bo, we're going to come back to you

and ask you to walk us through your editorial philosophy. How does that philosophy shape what you will accept and how you will work with authors?

Bo Li:
My editorial philosophy is to establish *ASA Discoveries* as a home for rigorous, innovative, and forward-looking research and education. We aim to cover a broad scope, but we are very intentional about maintaining a high bar for quality. That philosophy shapes both what we accept and how we work with authors.

On the acceptance side, we're looking for work that is technically sound, intellectually novel, and genuinely impactful—especially research that pushes the field in a new direction or connects ideas across areas.

On the process side, we care deeply about how authors experience the journal. We strive to provide timely and clear feedback, starting with thoughtful editorial screening. If a paper passes that initial stage, it will receive careful and serious attention from expert referees.

Just as importantly, we work to ensure the reviews are fair, balanced, and constructive. Even when a paper is not accepted, we want authors to feel that the feedback helped improve their work.

Recently, I received an email from an author who submitted a paper to *ASA Discoveries*, thanking us for the constructive feedback they received. In short, we see *ASA Discoveries* not just as a gatekeeper, but as a partner in advancing strong scholarship in our community.

Ron Wasserstein:
Thanks, Bo. I hear in that response the voice of experience, both as an author and as an editor at other journals. I'm sure authors are going to appreciate what you're bringing to this journal.

Sebastien and Shujie, I'd like to ask you about what success will look like in the first year of *ASA Discoveries*, beyond standard metrics like impact factors. What does a successful first year look like? And what does success look like five years out? Whoever would like to go first.

Shujie Ma:
I can go first. Beyond traditional metrics such as impact factor, we view success in the first year primarily in terms of community engagement, content quality, and visibility.

A successful first year would include attracting a diverse set of high-quality submissions across statistics, data science, and AI; publishing impactful articles that span both methodological innovation and real-world applications; and establishing the journal as a trusted, accessible venue for interdisciplinary research.

We would also consider it a success if authors, readers, and practitioners recognize *ASA Discoveries* as a welcoming platform for timely, relevant, and ethically grounded work, supported by open access and rapid dissemination.

Sebastien Haneuse:
I think we're also hoping that success means *ASA Discoveries* becomes a go-to journal at the intersection of statistics, data science, and AI. We envision a publication that is widely read and cited, known for both rigorous scholarship and practical relevance.

We're keenly aware that success must also reflect strong global participation. We're very interested in submissions from all over the world and hope to foster sustained interdisciplinary collaboration.

Ultimately, the goal is to shape the future of the field through *ASA Discoveries*—highlighting impactful discoveries, fostering innovation, and making high-quality research accessible to a broader scientific community and the public at large.

Donna LaLonde:
Thanks to both of you. This is exciting!

I'm going to get a little into the weeds with this next question and ask Galin and Abel to weigh in on AI as the great equalizer. What's the policy going to be on using AI to polish work before submission?

Galin Jones:
Thanks, Donna. I'll discuss our policy as it relates to authors, and Abel will address editors and reviewers.

We intend to follow Taylor & Francis's publicly available policy. The basic idea is that it's acceptable to use AI to help polish writing, assist with idea generation, or help with code, but that use must be acknowledged. Generative AI cannot be listed as an author, and it must be used responsibly.

Text or code generated by AI cannot be included without significant revision and engagement by the authors. AI cannot be used for synthetic data generation or to substitute missing data without a robust methodology. Generating inaccurate content—including in supplemental materials, is prohibited.

That said, we also recognize the reality that many of us, me included, use AI tools to help polish writing or generate ideas, and that is permissible within these guidelines.

Abel Rodriguez:
Another important aspect for authors is that image generation and image manipulation are prohibited under Taylor & Francis policies. That's different from text, and authors should keep that in mind when preparing manuscripts.

These AI policies apply not only to authors, but also to the editorial board and associate editors. We must be mindful of confidentiality, proprietary data, and privacy concerns. Editors and reviewers are not allowed to put manuscripts into generative AI tools to assist with the review process—that's a clear no-go zone.

It is permissible for reviewers or editors to use AI to polish the language of their reviews, but they must ensure that no confidential or proprietary information is shared with AI systems.

Donna LaLonde:
Thanks, Galin and Abel. We'll be sure to link to the Taylor & Francis policy in the show notes so listeners can review it.

Bo and Shujie, I'm going to ask you to get into the weeds as well. Reproducibility is a concern across many fields. How are you approaching code and data sharing?

Bo Li:
Reproducibility is absolutely a serious issue, and it was something the editorial team discussed at length before launching *ASA Discoveries*. We all agree that reproducibility of methods, code, and results is essential for scientific progress.

Ideally, a journal would have the resources to formally verify reproducibility for every accepted paper. However, at this stage, like most journals, we simply do not have the bandwidth to conduct full reproducibility checks ourselves.

Rather than overpromising, we decided to be transparent about what we can and cannot do. Because *ASA Discoveries* is an open-access journal, the broader community is naturally positioned to evaluate, test, and validate published work.

We strongly encourage authors to share code and data, typically through supplementary materials or public repositories. While sharing ultimately remains the author's choice, we believe openness benefits everyone. I'll pass this to Shujie to add anything she'd like.

Shujie Ma:
I agree that sharing code has become increasingly important, especially from the author's perspective. When a paper introduces a new method without accompanying code, it becomes much harder for others to use, extend, or adopt the work. In practice, this can significantly limit the paper's visibility and long-term influence.

While we do not mandate code or data sharing, we view it as a strong positive signal for reproducibility, trust, and impact. Looking ahead, *ASA Discoveries* is committed to exploring additional ways to strengthen reproducibility.

This may include encouraging standardized documentation, clear data descriptions, reproducible workflows, and the use of persistent public repositories. We also aim to highlight exemplary reproducible papers as models for the community and to promote a culture where transparency and openness are recognized as core elements of high-quality research.

Ultimately, our goal is to foster an ecosystem in which reproducibility is supported not only by policies, but also by community norms. By encouraging open research practices and community-driven verification, *ASA Discoveries* seeks to contribute meaningfully to improving reproducibility across statistics, data science, and AI.

Donna LaLonde:
Thanks for that. Every answer just makes me more excited about *ASA Discoveries*. We're so grateful for all the work you're doing.

Abel, you touched on this earlier, but could you say more about emerging research methods, formats, or types of scholarship you're excited to publish—especially work that might not fit the traditional journal model?

Abel Rodriguez:
Yes, of course. One area that has come up repeatedly is work at the intersection of statistics and AI. I think there are many important foundational questions for modern AI methods—particularly generative AI—where statistical thinking can lead to important advances. We hope to be a venue for statisticians engaging in that work.

I also mentioned my interest in research infrastructure. We publish data notes and registered reports, which is another way we differentiate ourselves. As a discipline, method development has traditionally been valued more than assembling data repositories or resources that benefit the broader community, even though those resources can significantly advance the field.

These publication mechanisms allow us to address that imbalance. Another area I'm excited about is methodology for reproducibility itself—not just reproducibility of individual papers, but advances in how reproducibility is achieved more broadly.

Finally, ethics in data science is an important area. These submissions need to be substantive and grounded in statistical methodology, not just case studies. This kind of work often lacks a clear home in the statistics community, and we believe *ASA Discoveries* can provide one.

Ron Wasserstein:
Sebastien, I'm going to say something that will surprise absolutely no one: academic publishing can be incredibly slow.

What's you're thinking about leveraging new workflows to provide faster feedback while still maintaining rigorous vetting?

Sebastien Haneuse:
That's an excellent question, and one we think about almost daily. In a previous editorial role, I served as the statistical editor for *JAMA Network Open*, an open-access general clinical journal established about eight years ago. I was among the original editors there, and one key lesson I learned is that publishing doesn't actually have to be that slow.

We need to create incentives and a culture—especially among the editorial board—that prioritize efficiency without sacrificing rigor. One of the strengths of *ASA Discoveries* is that we've had these discussions from the outset.

We don't have unlimited tools to address cultural issues, but we can lead by example. We're mindful of frustrating experiences authors have had, including long review times and unclear outcomes.

As an editorial board, we can ensure we only assign papers to associate editors when we believe they have a reasonable chance of success. Because we're open access, we're not beholden to rigid publishing deadlines, which allows us to be more judicious.

When papers are sent for revise-and-resubmit, we aim to make decisions expeditiously and provide clear guidance about what changes are needed. We don't intend to hold onto papers unnecessarily. Leading by example is key.

Ron Wasserstein:
The revise-and-resubmit process brings up certain memories for me. Years ago, I worked with someone who would send reports back with edits, I'd revise them and then receive edits restoring the original text. I learned to live with that.

But all the things you're talking about will resonate deeply with authors. People will be excited about *ASA Discoveries* because of this approach.

Galin, I want to switch gears and ask for advice you might have for early-career researchers looking to publish their most boundary-pushing work in *ASA Discoveries*.

Galin Jones:
The biggest piece of advice I can give is simple: submit it to *ASA Discoveries*. Do it immediately.

We're looking for impactful, boundary-pushing work in statistics, machine learning, and AI—whether theoretical, methodological, or applied. We're also open to novel article types that don't have a clear home elsewhere, such as data reports, preregistrations, and work on ethics.

Because the scope may feel new or unfamiliar, it doesn't hurt to reach out to the editors and ask whether your paper might be appropriate. We're happy to have those conversations.

Ron Wasserstein:
Thanks, Galin. Bo, I'll come back to you one last time. Someone listening might be thinking, "After hearing this, I'd like to be involved in *ASA Discoveries*." What opportunities are there for people who want to contribute?

Bo Li:
That would be fantastic—if this podcast inspires people to want to get involved, that's a success.

First and foremost, we encourage researchers to submit their work. We're especially excited to see innovative, forward-looking papers that reflect where the field is headed. Another important way to contribute is by serving as a reviewer. Thoughtful, fair, and timely reviews are essential to building a strong journal, and we truly value the expertise and time of our reviewers.

We also welcome ideas and feedback. If someone has a vision for what the journal could or should be, we encourage them to reach out. Simply helping spread the word about this new journal also makes a big difference, especially in these early stages.

While the editorial board is set for now, we do expect it to evolve over time. As the journal grows, there will be opportunities to serve in more formal roles. We very much see *ASA Discoveries* as a community-driven journal and hope many people will grow with it.

Donna LaLonde:
Well, this has been incredible and we are super excited and grateful for all that you've done to get ASA discoveries launched. And we look forward actually to having you back in five years to see how prescient you were about predicting the future.

And with that, folks, we have one other tradition on practical significance, and that is we always conclude with Ron's top 10. So, I will turn it over to my colleague, Ron.

Ron Wasserstein:
Thank you, Donna. I've got a birthday coming up. At this point in life, I'm happy to keep having birthdays, but the number of birthdays has accumulated substantially, a fact that is measurable statistically. So, dear *Practical Significance* podcast listeners, here's my list of the "Top 10 Signs that I am Getting Older."

#10: My posterior distribution has shifted. I figured I should get that obvious joke out of the way first.

#9: The upward trend in my hazard function is disturbing.

#8: I am clearly a lagging indicator.

#7: To look presentable, I need a lot of smoothing.

#6: I keep telling the same stories indicating serious autocorrelation.

#5 My memory qualifies as sparse data.

#4: Four I am an outlier in any distribution that matters.

#3: Number three my model is suffering from drift.

#2: Number two there is observable shrinkage in many of my parameters.

And the #1 sign I am getting older: my random walk is more of a random shuffle.