

Teaching Shakespeare - introducing a peer review process

Teaching Shakespeare is 19 issues strong and 9 years old. In preparing to celebrate our 20th issue and 10th year of conception in 2021, this is a proposal to move *Teaching Shakespeare* to an open and post-publication review process (see Taylor Francis' [definitions](#) of these for more information). We welcome comments on this draft proposal using the Google docs comments function or by email to sarah.olive@york.ac.uk

The intended steps towards publication are:

- Authors submit their articles. They may also suggest or exclude a reviewer. If nominating a reviewer, they must provide an institutional address for them or a statement of their expertise AND state that there is no conflict of interest. The editor is not obliged to follow the suggestion.
- The editor does a basic check of the article for suitability (relevance and basic quality). Articles may be rejected by the editor at this stage. If not, the editor proofreads and makes the article conform to format and style, aiming for within one month of receipt.
- The article is published on the Education Network blog, with an invitation for readers to email the editor a peer review. A form will be made available for this purpose including boxes for: name, email address, affiliation (if applicable), statement of reviewer's expertise, comments for the author about what works well, what could be done to improve. NOT formatting and style, already dealt with. As a minimum, the editor plus one peer reviewer read the blog and write feedback within one month of its posting.
- Feedback is returned using the same form as for unsolicited reviews (above), with the addition that the peer reviewer and editor make a recommendation e.g. that the submission be accepted for inclusion in a magazine issue, provisionally accepted with revisions, or rejected without the possibility of revision.
- The author is asked to revise their article using these two pieces of feedback. Incorporating other feedback, from any unsolicited reviews received and passed on to the author by the editor, is optional. There is no set deadline for revisions, but the article won't be included in a magazine issue until it is returned satisfactorily.
- The editor checks that the revisions have been made, or revisions rejected have been explained (in the email containing the revised document), and proof-reads it again. The peer reviewer's role is to advise on the merit of the paper: the editor has the final decision on publication.
- The original blogpost will stand, but the revised version will be available online in the magazine issue.

- As soon as enough final versions of articles are received for a magazine issue, it is designed, uploaded and printed. Season markers are abandoned (Autumn, Spring etc). Issue numbers alone are used.

The rationale for this change is:

- To publish material faster (online, at least). The editor would work on articles as they come in, rather than waiting for an issue's worth of material (current practice). The design of entire magazine issues can be delayed depending on the designer's availability.
- To make the process of getting published more transparent. The editor is more accountable. Open review means others in the process are also accountable.
- To enhance the quality of articles. Peer review increases the author's accountability for what they write.
- To train up future editors e.g. as peer reviewers and to offer more opportunity for people in the BSA education community who want to gain peer-review and editorial experience.
- To abandon seasonal markers from the Northern hemisphere that are irrelevant to and off-putting for the global South.
- To have peer-reviewers who are a good fit with our authorship and readership - not just academics but relevant, education practitioners. It maintains the broad community flavour of publication. (No intention to turn TS into a traditional, academic journal).
- To allow authors whose writing is relevant and interesting for the BSA's education network a chance to publish on the blog (a suitable venue for diverse work, met with different reader expectations of quality to edited publications - even if the quality of their work is not ultimately good enough for the magazine).
- To draw more traffic to the website because of more frequent publications on the blog.
- To direct more traffic to the magazine as well as the blog because of the way individual blog posts show up in internet searches.
- Possible downsides: more frequent posts for the webmaster to make, posting articles. More work for the editor liaising with reviewers, solicited and otherwise.
- Challenge: editor needs to establish an editorial board or other pool of reviewers (sourced by appeal to trustees, BSA members who might be interested, previous authors, as well as individuals known for work on Shakespeare in education).

Sarah Olive,

Founding Editor,
Teaching Shakespeare

Formatting and style

If we go ahead with this, there are some things I need to know from the webmaster about their formatting and style requirements for posting to the blog, to minimise their workload:

- Font?
- Spacing?
- Margins?
- Paragraphing? Indentation?