

UMRA committee chair annual report

DATE: 8-2-25

TO: Cathy Lee Gierke, OCC Co-Chair (leegi001@umn.edu)
Julia Wallace, UMRA Archivist (juliafwallace1@gmail.com)

FROM: Kris Bettin, JOIE Editor

RE: Annual Report 2024-25, *Journal of Opinions, Ideas & Essays*

Charge to the Committee

To my knowledge, no charge has ever been given to this committee, although perhaps there should be one.

Committee members (include any designated duties)

Kris Bettin, Lynda Ellis, Edward Griffin, Jo Prouty

Activities (Number of meetings, location, number participating, etc.)

As editor-in-chief, I scheduled JOIE editorial committee meetings on an as-needed basis, usually 2-3 times per year. Now that I am a committee member, I have called only one meeting this year. Meetings are conducted via Zoom.

Focus of activities and key outcomes/accomplishments of this committee this year

During the past year, seven articles were added to JOIE, with one currently under review by the committee.

We made contact with Marilyn DeLong, co-chair of the Creative Writing Circle of the UMN Women's Club. She has given information on JOIE to the Circle members, two of whom have now published articles in JOIE. We hope this is the start of a long term, fruitful relationship.

Policy issues or changes over the year? Why?

I stepped down as editor-in-chief and am now a member of the editorial committee. I still accept submissions, guide their review, and upload the accepted contributions to JOIE. I write short solicitations for a new editor-in-chief. Unfortunately, due to family responsibilities, I am not able to participate in the Communications and Membership Committee nor can I support the journal in other ways.

Jo Prouty replaced Jan Hogan-Schiltgen as a member of the JOIE editorial committee.

One policy change, approved by the five (at the time) members of the editorial board, was to start publishing qualified submissions from outside the University of Minnesota. Termed "guest contributions," so far, three have been published and one additional essay, from a British postdoctoral fellow, is under review. This change was approved due to the low number of submissions by UMN authors and the surprisingly frequent submissions by nonUMN authors.

Challenges or problems faced/solved? Innovations?

The most urgent problem for JOIE is finding a new editor-in-chief. I stepped down as editor-in-chief in June 2024 – since then, we have placed a call for a new volunteer to helm the journal in virtually every issue of the UMRA Newsletter and UMRA E-news, as well as posting it on the UMRA website. So far, not a single person has contacted me with so much as a question on the journal.

Suggestions for future chairs/leaders

Suggestions include maintaining the collection of documents relating to JOIE that I have set up. When I started as editor-in-chief in early 2021, there were no documents relating to JOIE except a handful of emails by Martin Dworkin, who established the journal in 2013. I have set up and maintained operating documents for JOIE to assist future editors and committee members. I have retained all documents related to the review and publication of articles and videos in JOIE. Again, maintaining these records is critical to the continuity of the journal.

Another suggestion is to schedule the editor-in-chief to present an overview of JOIE during at least one UMRA Luncheon Forum per year.

It has also been suggested that JOIE be reframed as an e-magazine rather than a journal, perhaps making it more palatable to retired faculty and staff who are weary of publishing in professional journals. There has been no discussion of this so far.

What could UMRA leadership do to enhance your committee's work?

The most effective advertisement for JOIE so far has been word-of-mouth connections. If those in leadership roles mentioned JOIE to UMRA members whenever possible, it might raise the profile of the journal.

It would also be helpful to have a regular column in the UMRA Newsletter similar to those of the UMRA interest groups. I think that JOIE needs to be more visible to our membership and having at least one short paragraph in each newsletter might eventually stimulate members to think about writing an article or submitting a video. I understand that space in the newsletter is somewhat limited.

Suggestions for what you and/or the organization you work with could do that would help UMRA move forward?

JOIE does not seem to have an integral role in UMRA and it's not clear to me how to change that.