Introduction

The journal IMPULSE was started by four undergraduate students and one faculty member in the spring of 2003. The first issue was posted in 2004, and a total of eleven issues have been archived, one per year. The current, 2013 issue, is the thirteenth. The journal has evolved from a once-per-year posting reviewed by students at a single institution, to rolling review and posting by students worldwide representing twelve institutions. The first issue was reviewed by 34 students from three countries and two continents, with a single Faculty Advisor and Reviewer Site (RTS). The 2014 issue posted with over 100 student reviewers representing over 30 institutions in six countries and four continents. Many of these students were members of the 12 RTS, one of which was in South Africa. The rest of the Reviewers were individuals who simply wished to have the experience and applied to join as independent Reviewers. They were assigned to an RTS team and sent their reviews to the Associate Editor from that RTS. Each RTS had its own Associate Editor who compiled the team’s review and a Faculty Advisor who oversaw and taught the reviewing process. The most recent RTS to be added (2014) was from Carnegie Mellon University.

We have reported previously on the value of involving students as reviewers and authors in the undergraduate neuroscience journal IMPULSE to promote their awareness of pre-medical career plans. It is also a less intimidating means for non-anglophone, university students to work on their English language reading, reviewing, and writing skills in the sciences. It is an accessible way in which teachers approach the peer review system to and involve them directly in the scientific process. Results from a recent survey (NIH, 2014) indicated that students outside of science disciplines could also benefit from working with the journal, enhancing their understanding of the scientific process for related careers in business, journalism, or the arts.

A course that utilizes the journal could be designed (see a published example at http://web.ca.bucknell.edu/journals/2014357327_03, at left), or a team of student reviewers could be created, comprising students from different fields. This would make learning about neuroscience, as well as the scientific enterprise and publishing, available to students in many areas of study. Since the realm of professionals that require some scientific expertise include those involved writing, entrepreneurship, and everything from dance studies to sociology, it would be useful for all students to have some understanding of the brain/mind. Current examples from the IMPULSE Editorial team are a Journalism major (Editor-in-Chief), a Math major (Managing Editor), and an English (Writing) major (Executive Associate Editor).

While taking a neuroscience class or working in a research lab may not be an option for many of these non-science students, working with the journal may help bridge the gap between their field of study, whether it is journalism or business, and the world of neuroscience.

Creating a Reviewer Training Site at any institution is easy and does not require any special application process. There are no costs, and the manner of involvement is flexible and up to each Faculty Advisor at each RTS. Some choose to offer a course for new Reviewers, some work with a campus neuroscience club, while others just focus on a group of students doing research in their laboratory. All that is needed is to start an RTS at an institution is a faculty member willing to take on the role of the Faculty Advisor (see list at right of current FA) and a few students willing to be Reviewers (one will become the Associate Editor for that RTS). The process works very quickly, with submissions being forwarded by the Executive Associate Editor to all of the RTS Associate Editors, who then distribute the manuscript to their RTS Review Team for review. A compiled, single review from each RTS is returned to the EAE and a final, unified compilation is created by the Executive Editor for return to the authors, usually within 6-5 weeks.

Opportunities in the journal IMPULSE for non-anglophone student publishing and reviewing for all disciplines

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History of IMPULSE

2003: M. Wilkinson, A. Anloy, L. Heilbrink, and S. Brouhard formed new journal with Dr. J.A. Jones; IMPULSE at 1st SYNAPSE meeting


2007: IMPULSE at 2nd SYNAPSE (Barcelona Coll.), 1st NIH World Congress of Neuroscience in Melbourne, Australia, and SNS. Nat. Acad., Executive Ed.

2008: IMPULSE at 3rd SYNAPSE (U. of Guelph, U. of Adelaide, U. of Zealand, U. of Western Ontario) and SNS. Nat. Acad., Executive Ed.

2009: IMPULSE at 7th SYNAPSE (Barcelona Coll.), 8th FENS Forum in Cambridge, UK, and SNS, Nat. Acad., Executive Ed.

2010: IMPULSE at 8th SYNAPSE (Kobe Univ.), 9th FENS Forum in Amsterdam, Netherlands, and SNS, Nat. Acad., Executive Ed.

2014: IMPULSE at 10th SYNAPSE (University of the Free State, South Africa). IMPULSE joins Directory of Open Access Journals; 2nd RTS at Middlebury College with Dr. K. Cronise.

2015: IMPULSE at 11th SYNAPSE (University of South Carolina, USA), as an RT.1 (with FA) and SNS (Washington, D.C.).

Review Board (con’t)

Brian Archer, Ph.D., Appalachian State University

Eli Fishbein, M.S., Middlebury College

Helen Ward, B.S., University of Wisconsin-Madison

Sara K. Lim, University of California, Los Angeles

L. Heilbrink, SNS, Nat. Acad., Executive Ed.

K. Heilbrink, University of Arizona

A. Jones, University of Rochester

B. Goodlett, Boston University

A. Reinhard, Middlebury College

M. Smith, University of South Carolina

K. Cronise, Middlebury College (USA)

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