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General Questions

What is *topiCS*?

topiCS is a new journal devoted to Cognitive Science. It will be rigorously peer-reviewed. It will also be different from most journals in that the charge to the Associate Editors is to find exciting, under reported work, across the full-range of cognitive science topics, and to recruit the best authors in these areas to submit their work to *topiCS*.

Which types of submissions are possible?

Many types of submissions may be included in *topiCS*. What follows is a sampling, not an exhaustive list.

- **New and Emerging:**

New or emerging work from people in disciplines that may not consider themselves to be cognitive scientists, but who are doing cognitive science work. Reviews or updates on established cognitive science areas in which recent years has seen an upsurge of interest and/or a major paradigm shift. Quick publication of award winning work presented at the annual Cognitive Science Conference or of outstanding cognitive science work presented at non-Cognitive Science conference.

- **Integrative and Reflective:**

This category of papers challenges established researchers to not simply report on their current research but to step back and discuss larger issues in cognitive science through Integrative and Reflective papers that go beyond a single research topic to examine broader issues and trends. An example of this is the Visions of Cognitive Science topic that is represented in this first issue by 6 lively and interesting papers from leading members of our community. (See Volume 1, Issue 1 of *topiCS*.) Another example is the topic Philosophy in Cognitive Science and Cognitive Neuroscience for which Associate Editor Andrew Brooks (Carleton University) has asked leading philosophers to discuss the influence of their philosophy on contemporary cognitive science. Philosophers who are onboard for this topic include William Bechtel, Daniel Dennett, Pierre Jacob, Thomas Metzinger, Zenon Pylyshyn, and Paul Thagard.

- **Great debates:**

Two or more target articles (or two or more groups of researchers) that take different positions on a topic of interest to the larger cognitive science community. Smaller commentary articles discussing the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. This category may present a mix of *New and Emerging* and *Integrative and Reflective* papers.

- **Commentary and Responses:**

All readers of *topiCS* are encouraged to send commentaries to the Editor or to the Associate Editor who handled a particular paper. *topiCS* is serious about encouraging commentaries and a section of each issue will be reserved for the *Commentary and Response* topic.

What format is required for submitted manuscripts?

With the following exceptions, all submitted manuscripts must conform to the guidance of the APA Publication Manual.

— Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (2009). (6th ed.). Washington: American Psychological Association. Available from: <http://books.apa.org>. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Exceptions:

1. Include figure captions with figures on all manuscript submissions that will be reviewed. Once the paper is accepted for publication then you will receive specific instructions on how to prepare the paper for publication.
2. You may refer to human subjects as "subjects" rather than as "participants." The term "subjects" has an old and established tradition within empirical studies of human behavior and does not reflect any dehumanizing of the people who are recruited and participate in our studies. Depending on context and the study you may also refer to them in terms that seem appropriate, e.g., operators, pilots, gamers, etc.
3. By all means, as a courtesy to your reviewers who may drop the paper version of your manuscript on the floor, please number your pages!! Seriously, it is much easier for a reviewer to refer to a paragraph or section if the pages are numbered.

topiCS sections versus *Special Issues*?

Topics selected for *topiCS* will appear in a section of the journal under the name of that topic. Although there may be a few topics that take up an entire issue of the journal, most topics will appear as a section of one issue with some topics appearing as a section across multiple issues of *topiCS*.

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Preparing a Proposal for topiCS – updated 2011-04-17

First – Consider that the range of pages for most topics should be between 120 and 140. At 400 words per page, approximately how many papers do you expect to have? Note that there is no expectation that all authors be allotted or produce manuscripts of the same length. The pages per author decision is part of your editorial discretion and your negotiation with your authors. However, if at the time we go into production, the total number of pages exceeds 140, you will have to make some hard decisions as to which articles to exclude.

Second – Many topics begin life as small workshops or some other small group of like-minded researchers. This is certainly a good place to begin soliciting authors; however, consider broadening your pool by going outside the participants of the workshop.

Third – How will you solicit authors?

The journal and its Editorial Board can help you solicit papers from the wider cognitive science community. Rather than full papers, a call can go out for responses by interested researchers and you and others can work to solicit full papers from those that best fleshout your topic.

Alternatively, if your topic began as a workshop, is it your intention to invite all of the attendees at the workshop to submit papers? Or will this be more by invitation. Or do you see

some sort of process of negotiation between you and the attendees and those you will be wanting to recruit (as per #2) who are not in attendance?

Remember that no matter how you go about soliciting papers, selectivity in the final acceptances is the key. Fewer highly influential papers are better than many low quality ones.

Fourth – Be sure to highlight the current debates, substantive issues, controversies in the topic you are proposing

Fifth – *topiCS* is an international journal. Does your list of intended authors adequately represent the interest in your topic throughout world wide cognitive science community? There is a increasingly vibrant and growing Pacific Rim community of cognitive scientists who often find it hard to travel to North American or European conferences. Is this community appropriately represented in your proposed list of invitees?

Sixth – Cognitive science is broader than cognitive psychology, cognitive anthropology, artificial intelligence, linguistics, etc. We are looking for topics that span a broad range of cognitive science. Are the authors representative of a narrow, disciplinary bound area of cognitive science or do they represent the range of cognitive science interest in your topic?

Please note that this item is not intended to be a "political correctness" item. For example, there are many examples of people with degrees in Computer Science, Media Studies, or Education who are now members of Departments of Psychology. Likewise, there are many people (again as one example) trained as computer scientists or psychologists who are currently engaged in cognitive neuroscience or cognitive modeling research. Hence, current affiliation or the department listed on a Doctoral Degree may not be a true indicator of the cognitive science breadth of your proposal. However, it is essential that your proposal address this issue.

Seven – What types of papers will you be soliciting? New experimental research? Reviews? Integrative summaries? Cognitive modeling? New theories? Old theories?

Eight – Finally, all *topiCS* papers must be rigorously reviewed. The Editor expects that a certain number of submissions will be rejected regardless of the author and regardless of the "invited" nature of the topic. What editorial process will you set in place to guarantee a rigorous peer review process? An example proposal for an editorial process might be the following:

Example 1. Each submitted paper will be assigned to one AE as Action Editor. The other AE will be assigned as a reviewer (these roles will alternative across the submitted papers). A second reviewer will be recruited from the authors of the other submitted papers. Finally, to ensure that the paper is accessible beyond the narrow focus of this topic area, the third reviewer will be recruited from the general cognitive science community.

Example 2: All articles will be peer-reviewed to ensure the highest quality contributions. I will solicit three reviewers for each submission, including at least one whose primary research area is outside the area of this topic. This will be done to ensure that the articles address issues that are of interest to the broad audience intended for the journal, and that the content has been written to be accessible to those readers. My goal will be for the reviewers to represent the diversity of the journal's readership.

Example 3. Each submitted paper will be sent out to three reviewers, at least one of which will be a psycholinguist and at least one a computational linguist. (Other specialists will be brought in where necessary.) Reviewers will be recruited primarily from our Program Committee. Similar arrangements were in place for the workshop, but acceptance of papers for the journal will be subject to substantially higher standards than was the case for the workshop.

Ninth – If your topic is accepted you will become a topiCS Associate Editor so please read the material below regarding the Editorial Board and Associate Editors. As an AE you will be responsible for enforcing the page limits given to you by the Executive Editor. Most topics will be allotted approximately 120-140 pages for content (see the discussion of this below). In your proposal, comment on how you would enforce these page limits and, if your reviewed and accepted papers go over that page limit, how you would break the news to an author that their positively reviewed paper will not be part of your issue of topiCS.

Tenth – Making a difference. How will this special issue make a difference? What goal does it aim to achieve? How will this special issue change the community represented by the special issue? How will this special issue change other communities outside?

Eleventh – Managing a topic.

Who are you? Tell us who you are by including a CV (one for you and one for each of your proposed Action Editors - see next paragraph) that allows the Board of Editors to judge your experience as a researcher, reviewer, and editor. Clearly all topiCS proposers should have an established record of published research in high quality venues. It is also the case that most proposers will have some track record as reviewers for various journals and conference proceedings. Tell us about these. On the other hand, we do not expect that most proposers will have experience in organizing reviews for journal or for conference papers. Indeed, topiCS plays an important role in mentoring the next generation of editors and associate editors for the field of Cognitive Science. We expect all topiCS Editors to work with the Executive Editor in organizing and conducting the reviews. Depending on circumstances and the topic, the Board of Editors might advocate the addition of someone with a record of editorial experience as a co-Topics Editor for your proposal.

Who will be managing the topic? We are now distinguishing between the role of Associate Editor who is an Editorial Board member and Action Editors whose role is limited to their topic.

For all topics accepted after December 1, 2010 there will be one person who becomes an Associate Editor of the *topiCS* Editorial Board. There can be several people who become Action Editors for their topic. The Associate Editor and the Action Editor(s) will be listed as "Topic Editors" on the journal issue(s) when the topic appears in print. The Associate Editor will serve a term of not more than three years and his/her name will be listed in the journal and various journal-related webpages as an Editorial Board member.

During the review, revision, and publication process, the Associate Editor will be the one person in charge of communicating with the Executive Editor (Wayne Gray) and the Managing Editor (Caroline Verdier). In general, the topic proposers are free to organize their internal structure as best fits the topic and their individual strengths and weaknesses.

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Editorial Board

Many of the topics for *topiCS* will originate with the Board of Associate Editors. The Board would issue a call for papers on a given topic and would play an active role in recruiting authors to contribute papers. All papers would be heavily reviewed. Being invited to contribute to an issue of *topiCS* would not guarantee acceptance.

Note that one way to become an Associate Editor for *topiCS* is to propose an interesting and exciting issue. People who have organized successful symposium at the Cognitive Science Conference or other conferences should consider themselves and their symposium topic prime candidates.

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Associate Editors

Contacting prospective authors

We are developing a letter that will introduce prospective authors to *topiCS*. Our intention would be that the *topiCS* Editor would incorporate parts of the letter into their contact letter by cutting and pasting what they consider to be the most relevant paragraphs, or by including the entire letter as an attachment that follows their more personal introduction to their topic.

Word limits, page limits, limits on number of authors

Peer-reviewed journals play a quality-control role in the world of scholarly publication. Rigorous reviewing and extensive feedback to authors characterize the best journals. This process requires a strong commitment to quality and detailed reviews from many people for each issue. Likewise, high quality journals should look good and read well. These production standards require the services of a quality publisher and a team of copy-editors who can work with authors on their prose. These considerations mean that even in the world of electronic

publication (*topiCS* will be both print and electronic) there is a practical limit on pages per issue.

The page allocation for *topiCS* is 200 pages per issue. This includes a few pages listing the editors, review board, policy of the journal, and any ads. Associate Editors (AEs) should aim for approximately 120-140 pages for content. Depending on the issue, we could run four 30-page papers, six 20-page papers, eight 15-page papers, or twelve 10-page ones. In practice I suspect that there would be a mix of paper lengths. Sometimes the mix would result as authors would send shorter papers than expected. In other cases the mix would result from the Associate Editor allocating more words to some papers than for others (e.g., target articles versus commentaries).

For issues of *topiCS* that survey an area (one without target articles), I would like to aim for about 8,000 words per paper (about 20 pages), with a total of 9 to 10 articles. The tradeoff is between depth and breadth and in many cases it would be better to go for breadth. In that case, having a mix of 15-page (6,000 words) and 20-page (8,000 words) papers might work well. Obviously having a few 4,000-word (10-page) papers is an option as well. The nature of the mix is something that the Associate Editor should work on with the Editor before contributors are solicited.

Publication timeline

Everyone wants to know, "how soon can my issue appear in print?" Fair question. The biggest chunk of time is the time you spend recruiting good researchers and the time they spend writing their papers. The timetable is driven by your slowest author and your slowest reviewer and you. Once all first drafts are completed and sent to *topiCS* here is what the timeline looks like:

- 0 month (START): All manuscripts are due to Editors.
- +3 month: The last of the manuscripts is reviewed; editor decisions are made; and letters are sent to authors.
[Do not underestimate the amount of time it will take you to read all of the reviews, the paper, and write your letters.]
- +5 month: All 1st revisions are due in [authors need some time to revise their manuscript].
- +7 month: All 1st revisions are reviewed, editor decisions made, and letters sent to authors.
- +8 month: All 2nd revisions from all authors are due in.
- +10 month: All 2nd revisions reviewed, editorial decisions made; and all letters are sent to authors.
- +11 month: All final revisions due from authors; all manuscripts are sent to publisher.
- +12-14 month: All papers published in the next issue of *topiCS*. [Our intention is to encourage a friendly competition among *topiCS* Editors. No one is promised any

particular issue. Rather each one will go into the publication queue as soon as it is complete.]

When will my topic be published?

We don't have a set issue that we are aiming for. Rather, as a new journal, we have a set of concerns we are juggling. We would like to publish the papers in your topic in either one or two issues of *topiCS*. Our twin concerns are timely publication of individual papers and regular, quarterly publication of the journal. Regular publication is important for us to be listed by services such as ISI's Web of Science. Timely publication is important to our authors. In general, as soon as the initial articles for a topic are ready, we put that topic into the publication queue. At this point our queue is very short; however, our goal is to have a queue that is 2-3 issues deep. This will allow us to guarantee regular publication that is very timely by the standards of most journals. Until we develop a queue, we may publish an initial subset of articles in one issue, and the rest of your articles in a second issue. This will ensure the rapid publication for your authors and regular publication for the journal.

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Reviews and Reviewers

Is there a requirement to reject a certain proportion of papers?

Question: Is the requirement to reject some papers strictly necessary? Our list of potential invitees includes many very high profile people and while we are happy with the possibility of rejecting substandard papers, we are uncomfortable with the requirement to reject a proportion of, possibly high quality, papers.

Answer: There is no such requirement **but** . . . our experience with *topiCS* is that very good people can produce very bad papers. It may be that some good people are so busy that they use the review process as part of their revision strategy. For others it might be that they are simply best at writing when they have no fixed deadline (as would be the case for most journal papers) and rush their writing process to meet the deadline of a *topiCS* paper. "Revise and resubmit" is a category used a lot by other *topiCS* Editors in the past. You would probably be surprised by the number of distinguished researchers, including the occasional Rumelhart Prize winner, whose first submission has been assigned to the Revise and Resubmit category. Make sure all of your authors know that an invitation to submit does not mean that the paper will not be rigorously reviewed and that you might ask for significant changes. Don't be afraid of using the R&R category with detailed editorial guidance as to what changes would be needed to make the next submission acceptable.

Note that another problem that some Topics Editors have had is "relevance." No matter what you do or say it always seems as if there is at least one paper that really is not on target. Occasionally a Topic seems plagued by this problem. In some cases the papers are quite good but (a) not really on topic and/or (b) more or less on topic but something that really should

have been submitted to a speciality journal in linguistics, experimental psychology, mathematics, or elsewhere as it would have easily fit in with the papers in other fields. Both the Cognitive Science journal and topiCS are aiming for papers that really do not fit in with standard disciplinary journals.

Who is the Audience for My Reviews?

The simple and wrong answer to this question is "the authors". The **Editor** is the main audience for your review. The Editor is working hard to ensure that well-written, leading edge work is being published in the journal. He or she has asked you to assist in this endeavour. Your main obligation is to provide the Editor with enough information to make an informed decision about what to do with the manuscript. Your secondary obligation is to the author to help them improve the current manuscript or to politely point out the failings that prevent the current manuscript from being published.

From the Editor's perspective having a reviewer who is so overly sensitive to an author's feelings that s/he will not put any negative evaluation into the comments that the author sees is almost worse than useless. If you tell the Editor in the "comments for the editor only section" that the paper has serious problems that need to be resolved before it can be accepted, please, please enumerate those problems in the portion of the review that the authors receive.

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Authors

Help with meeting NIH requirements for PubMed?

The publisher's policy is to deposit the accepted manuscript version of articles based on NIH-funded research to PubMed Central, for public access 12 months after publication, in line with the NIH mandate. This is something that the publisher has been handling since April 2008 for authors who submit to any and all Wiley-Blackwell journals. For more information see: http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/bauthor/NIH_policy.asp