

Honorary Officer: Publications

Role description

Professor John Kent, the Honorary Officer for Publications is standing down from 1 January 2022 and we are now seeking a successor. Recently, the role has focussed on the Society's Journal Series, and we are looking to include Significance magazine in the general remit of the new Honorary Officer.

This role is one of great importance for the Society due to the key strategic issues brought about by the impact of Open Access on revenue streams. There are additional challenges, including how to integrate the fast-moving landscape of data science into RSS publications.

The Society has the following publications:

The Journal of the Royal Statistical Society is a journal of quality with a very high international reputation. It is published in three series, Series A, B and C, which between them cover the range of statistical areas and level of complexity. Series A is a subject-matter-based journal with material that is of interest to both specialist and non-specialist readers, whereas Series B publishes papers on detailed statistical methodology. In between, Series C contains papers on novel applications of statistical techniques for both academic and non-academic workers. Series A is published four times a year, whereas Series B and C have five issues per year. The Journal is published by Wiley-Blackwell on behalf of the Society.

Amongst the challenges currently facing the journal are the threat from further moves to open access resulting in loss of income, and alternative financial models for learned paper publication. Other challenges include increasing the Society's profile in Data Science; the Rights Retention Strategy (RRS) recently introduced into the Research community; increasing openness of data and associated ethical considerations; working with the publishers to break into new and emerging markets and developing the electronic publishing technology to add value to the journals.

Significance is a bimonthly magazine for anyone interested in statistics and the analysis and interpretation of data. Its aim is to communicate and demonstrate in an entertaining, thought-provoking, and non-technical way the practical use of statistics in all walks of life and to show informatively and authoritatively how statistics benefit society. The magazine is published by Wiley-Blackwell on behalf of the Society.

Editorial production of *Significance* is funded jointly by the RSS and the American Statistical Association (ASA). The magazine employs a full-time professional editor, who is supported by an Editorial Board of expert statisticians appointed from among the RSS and ASA membership.

Although the magazine is unique in its field – being an outreach magazine focused on statistics – it faces challenges, particularly in trying to reach a wide audience on a limited editorial budget. In terms of expanding its reach, the magazine is looking to generate more contributions from data scientists and to encourage greater readership among the data science community.

1. The role

The Honorary Officer for Publications is a member of Council by co-option and a Trustee of the Society. Together with the President, the Honorary Officers are key players at the heart of the Society who form a team responsible for co-ordinating policy on all themes and offering advice to Council on a wide range of issues. The position therefore brings the opportunity to influence and shape the strategic direction and policy of the Society and to play a major role in one or more areas of the Society's activities.

2 Why do it?

An Honorary Officer can expect to gain a broader view of the Society, learn about areas outside their usual spheres, establish a substantial network of contacts and develop new transferable skills. In addition, there is the satisfaction of serving the discipline and helping to shape the Royal Statistical Society. A further benefit may be the potential synergies between the Honorary Officer's work for the Society and the salaried post in which they are employed – in both directions. Taking on the post of Honorary Officer is a serious commitment, but those who have done so feel they are amply rewarded by the enhancement of their own skills profile and by the contribution they make to the statistical community.

3. RSS Publications: The Journals and Significance

The Honorary Officer will oversee the work of RSS publications, providing support, challenge and guidance to staff and volunteers in the development and implementation of strategies that help the Society fulfil its charitable remit and any relevant policy objectives. The role is responsible for:

- Taking a strategic overview of the *Journals* and working closely with the chair of the *Significance* editorial board to support the strategic and commercial objectives of the magazine, advising and reporting to Council as appropriate on all publications matters.
- Reviewing activities to form part of the overall activity plan of the Society and supporting staff and volunteers to implement the agreed activity plan in their area.
- Ensuring that the publications remain at the highest standard and meet the diverse needs of the Society's membership, both inside and outside the statistical community.
- Establishing and maintaining existing support and consultation structures to provide information, advice, and assistance in implementation of policy.
- Supporting staff and volunteers with the review and planning of marketing and promotional activities related to publications.
- Participating in tender processes and reviews concerning the contract for publishing the *Journals* and *Significance*.
- Conducting a review of the existing Publications Network of Advisors and to consider alternative means of engaging RSS members,

sections, committees, and groups in shaping the Society's publications strategies and policies.

Judith Shorten, Journals Manager and Brian Tarran, Significance Editor, work together collaboratively with the Honorary Officer for Publications. The current contract to publish both publications is with Wiley with whom we have a close working relationship to ensure the contract is delivered. The past year has seen substantial changes to the journal publishing process with Wiley taking on the production editing role formally carried out in house at the RSS. These changes are still bedding down, and the Honorary Officer role will support both RSS staff and volunteers engaged with the journals to ensure the new processes meets the requirements of the Society.

4. General information

The Society's activities and interests are represented by the following Vice Presidents, Honorary Officers, and the Honorary Treasurer:

- Education
- External affairs
- Academic affairs
- Conferences and events
- Professional affairs
- Publications
- Sections, study groups & local groups
- Membership
- Finance
- Staffing
- National Statistics

5. Time commitment

The time commitment and balance of activities depend to some extent on the priorities of the Society and those of the publications at any given time, but the HO for Publications should expect to spend about ten hours a month. There are three Council meetings a year (currently remote and we anticipate that there will be two remote and one in person meeting in the coming year) and the annual meeting of the Publications Network of Advisors. The rest is flexible and desk-based, largely involving email or preparing reports.

6. Length of appointment

Honorary Officers will normally be expected to serve for four years. No Honorary Officer shall serve for more than six years in any period of ten consecutive years.

7. Support

Office

The role of the Honorary Officer is one of leadership, co-ordination, developing and implementing ideas and policy. The Honorary Officer for Publications will develop a close working relationship with the staff member involved in delivering the RSS Journals Series and, to a lesser extent, the Significance Editor.

It should be noted that the Significance Editor is accountable to the Significance Editorial Board for the implementation of the Board's editorial policy.

Institutional

No honoraria can be paid by the Society; nor are employers of Fellows recompensed for time devoted to voluntary Society duties. The RSS publishes guidance [here](#) for all Society volunteers.

Travel and subsistence

The Society will meet reasonable travel, hotel and subsistence costs incurred by the Honorary Officer whilst undertaking duties on behalf of the Society.

8. Person specification

The Honorary Officer for Publications should be enthusiastic about the work of the Society and should have experience and a reputation in some area of statistics, with a deep interest in, and familiarity of journal publishing processes. The role holder should have a broad interest in statistics and should appreciate the breadth of statistical activity within the discipline. As an Honorary Officer you should also bring to the area knowledge of your area of statistics, and of experts and other stakeholders in the field, as well as their experience as a user of the Society's services.

The role holder should be able to think creatively and innovatively about the Society and its goals, and the ways in which these might be improved. You will need to be a good communicator able to represent the Society within and outside the statistical community. You should be able to motivate, encourage and support the many people active in the Society's work; and should also be able to work in a team with others, such as Council members and staff. Skills at resolving conflict can also be an advantage.

The post involves some administration, and the ability to prepare reports and process correspondence to defined deadlines is important as these are regularly required for the Society's governance meetings.

9. Submission of suggestions and applications

The Society operates a transparent process to identify Honorary Officers. It establishes a search committee which is responsible for drawing up a job description, publicising the vacancy, receiving applications and nominations, researching these, and making a recommendation to Council. A search committee for the Honorary Officer for Publications has been established with the following membership:

Sylvia Richardson (President)
Stian Westlake (Chief Executive)

The Search Committee now seeks applications from and nominations that identify Fellows for consideration as the Honorary Officer for Publications.

The Committee welcomes expressions of interest from anyone interested in filling this post as well as suggestions from others of Fellows who have the qualities and experience to fill this position. There is no need to gain the permission of the person being suggested before putting forward their name.

Expressions of interest should be accompanied by a CV and a personal statement detailing why a candidate would be suited to the task.

The Committee will in due course approach the person they wish to nominate before putting forward their name to Council.

Applications and suggestions should be forwarded to Stian Westlake, Chief Executive of the Royal Statistical Society at 12 Errol Street, London EC1Y 8LX (email: s.westlake@rss.org.uk)