Call for Special Themed Sections & Special Section Policies
June 21, 2013 (Updated September 2015)

An Invitation

Reflections welcomes proposals for special themed sections to be edited by guest editors and published like the special issues long associated with the journal. Like the Special Issues of old, these are edited by Guest Editors and are peer reviewed by reviewers they assign. Like special issues they will typically feature cover art on the journal issue in which they appear. They can also be as long or even longer than previous issues, given our current online method of publication. Furthermore, they will still have an introduction by the Guest Editor(s). But they will appear inside a general issue in order to ensure that there is always room for general submissions in each issue. There will be well publicized Calls for each Special Section. Please consider proposing such a themed special section. For more information, please contact Michael A. Dover, Editor (2012-2017), at reflections@csuohio.edu.

Reflections will publish Special Sections rather than Special Issues beginning with the publication of our Special Issue on Librarians as Helping Professionals. We are grateful to the Guest Editors who have edited special issues published since the journal came to Cleveland State in 2012, including the Field Education Issue and the Mentoring issue, both of which originated at California State University Long Beach. The special issues published here also include Therapeutic Relationships with Service Members, Veterans and their Families edited by Cathleen Lewandowski, who is now Professor and Director here, and Interprofessional Collaborative Practice and Education, our current issue, published in April 2015 but backdated to Volume 19 #4 (Fall 2013).

The special issues pending publication are: Family of Origin: Reflections on Practice; Relative Caregiving; Honoring Our Indigenous Elders, Social Work with Children and Youth, and Dismantling Social and Racial Injustice: A Transformative Movement for Civil and Human Rights. When all the currently planned special issues are finished with peer review, editorial revisions, and publication, and current and pending general submissions are published, the Journal will have “caught up” and completed Volume 22, 2016.

Reflections had already begun to implement its intended new policy, which was to replace Special Issues with Special Sections. One special section has already been published: Vol 19, No 1 (2013): Includes Special Section On the Making of Female Macro Social Work Academics (Published June, 2014). A Special Section on Southern African Reflections on Social Work and Social Justice is pending publication.

These special themed sections should not be confused with the permanent sections already established and mentioned in the Call for Narratives on our website at www.rnoph.org. They include Field Education, Research Reflections, Teaching and Learning Reflections, and Historical Reflections. Articles in these sections are selected by the respective section editors and are published as available.
Summary of Policies

Special section content must be peer reviewed by two reviewers, including at least one regular reviewer and one reviewer from among special reviewers proposed by the Special Section Editor(s). There is relative autonomy for special sections, but special issue editors agree to utilize the standard review form (which includes a question about relevance to the Special Section Call for Narratives) and to welcome informal reviews and feedback from the Editor to the Special Section Editor about the submissions. Also, the Editor reserves the right to require an editorial decision short of accept for publication (see below for when this may take place). The date of publication is no longer indicated in the Call for Narratives for Special Sections, but there can be a deadline for submissions. In short, if you are interested in proposing a Special Section, visit the journal website and see the open calls for special sections, and visit here to open our Word version of a blank Call for Narratives; use it to write your proposal in the form of a draft Call for Narratives, and send it to the Editor.

Reflections has a long tradition of publishing wonderful special issues. They enrich the journal’s focus and ensure that the journal’s content is broadened beyond the kinds of narratives attracted by the journal’s regular reader and author base. The use of special sections will advance rather than hinder this tradition. Special sections may be as long as the earlier special issues, or even longer, now that we are published online without printing cost restrictions.

On the other hand, special sections can also be shorter, permitting focused attention to a topic addressed by a smaller number of narratives. In some cases, lack of sufficient content for special issues has resulted in their cancellation. Pressure to fill an entire issue could conceivably result in lowering standards or publishing articles that aren’t consistent with the journal’s focus. Given this size flexibility, it becomes possible to more actively seek special sections on a variety of topics, some neglected in the past in part because of concern about the ability to attract enough narratives to fill an entire special issue.

As in the past, special sections will involve special Calls for Narratives, and will involve special section editors with similar roles to special issues editors. Occasionally, there may be more than one special section in one issue, permitting more rapid publication of the special section’s content. The Open Journal Systems software used by Reflections empowered special section editors to use the full range of editorial powers in their work.

There were several other reasons for this editorial policy. There were scheduling problems in terms of figuring out when to publish a special issue and when to publish the accumulation of general submissions. Also, not all special issues involved a peer-reviewed by the Journal’s regular reviewers. Articles were often published solely or primarily based on oversight from special issue editors or co-editors, although occasionally the special issue editors set up their own peer review process or called upon the editor or the Journal’s reviewers. We look forward to continuing the publication of special content in collaboration with special section editors.

Proposals for Special Sections
Following initial consultation with the Editor, the editor or co-editors of a proposed Special Section will submit a draft Call for Narratives with content similar to previously published Special Issue/Section calls. For instance, it should have a proposed title, an introductory paragraph describing the content, and a bulleted list of 4-10 types of anticipated topics. The names and contact information for the co-editors should be included. The draft Call for Narratives will be considered by the Editor and the Associate Editor of Special Sections. Recommendations for revision may be made, including suggestions regarding the content of the call and recommendations to expand the Special Section editorial team. Upon approval, the Call for Narratives will also include the deadline for submissions of manuscripts agreed to by all concerned. The Call will also contain a notice that authors receiving a decision of accept with revisions or revise and re-submit will be given an individualized deadline for revisions or re-submissions for publication in the Special Section. (See below for handling of revisions/re-submissions received after that deadline). Upon final agreement on the nature of the Call, it will be posted on the Journal’s website and journal site, and the Special Section Editors will be encouraged to further publicize the Call.

**Peer Review Process**

The Special Section peer review process is designed to ensure a healthy balance between feedback from reviewers who have direct subject specific expertise and those who have experience writing and reviewing narratives for Reflections. The standard reviewing form of Reflections is used in the review process (please see Review Guidelines on our journal site). The Journal’s review form contains the following question: “If this narrative was submitted to a Special Section, is the content relevant to the Call for Narratives of that Special Section? Please also comment on any contribution the narrative would make to the Special Section topic. If not submitted to a Special Section, please indicate NA.”

Special Section Editors are provided Section Editor status within the Open Journal Systems software. All manuscripts must be submitted within that process. Where authors have difficulty doing so, Special Section Editors are able to assist them and/or call on the Journal editorial staff for assistance.

Each manuscript must receive at least two anonymous peer reviews. At least one must be by one of the Journal’s regular reviewers, selected by the Special Issue Editors. The Editor is available for consultation on choice of reviewers. In addition Special Section Editors must appoint one or more reviewers who have substantive experience in the area and agree to register as a reader, author and reviewer for Reflections and to review articles consistent with the Journal’s reviewing procedures. The Special Section Editor or Co-Editors then assign the second peer review to that colleague. This means that it is likely that such a reviewer would be reviewing multiple manuscripts. In order to provide more recognition for such Special Section reviewers, one option is to appoint them as a third or fourth Co-Editor, with the understanding however, that the primary Editor or two primarily Co-Editors would make the editorial decisions based on the reviews. If such additional Co-Editors are added following the initial issuance of the Call, the Call can be revised in that regard or they can be included among the Co-Editors in the Special Section as published.
**Deadlines for Manuscripts and for Revisions/Re-Submissions:** It is valuable and important for Special Section Editors to have the same range of editorial decisions available as is the case with general submissions, and this includes revise and re-submit. However, it is hard to know in advance how many of the manuscripts will require revisions or re-submission to the Special Section prior to publication. This is why the Issue in which Special Sections will be published is **not announced** in the Call for Narratives of the Special Section. Each Special Section will have an announced date deadline for submissions of new manuscripts, and a notice that authors receiving a decision of accept with revisions or revise and re-submit will be given an individualized deadline for revisions or re-submissions for publication in the Special Section, with revisions/re-submissions after that deadline but within two months of that deadline receiving consideration by the Special Section editors for publication in a subsequent general issue. Following those two months, the Special Section process would be closed and authors would be required to re-submit the article to the general submission process. This approach respects the needs of Special Section Editors and the authors of already-accepted narratives to bring the Special Section to publication, but it also respects the need to provide for possible eventual publication of promising manuscripts and for their work to benefit from the special attention of the Special Section Editors. It also gives the Special Section editors leeway to agree to consider manuscripts received too far after the original Special Section submission deadline for publication in the Special Section, but which they would like to see eventually published. Finally, it enables Special Section Editors to set individualized deadlines for revisions/re-submissions with the likely publication date of the Special Section in mind, without penalizing authors cases where that deadline is shorter rather than longer.

**Special Section Relative Autonomy**

Special Section editors will enjoy a great deal of autonomy. However, according to Journal editorial policy, the special issue editors agree to welcome informal reviews and feedback on the articles from the Editor. This feedback will be provided to the special issue/section editors prior to their editorial decisions, not directly to the authors. The special issue editors can then take this into consideration in crafting their own editorial decisions and feedback to authors. They are free to treat those informal reviews and feedback on articles as merely substantive suggestions, which they may utilize or not at their entire discretion.

However, the Editor reserves the right to require an editorial decision short of accept for publication if it is felt that a manuscript is not ready for or suitable for publication in Reflections on the grounds that it is not sufficiently narrative in nature or presents a risk of violation of elements of the Publication Agreement which all authors (including special section authors) must sign. Such a requirement would come prior to the editorial decision of the special editors, not later. This means only that the Special Section Editor would have to choose whether to accept with required revisions, or to revise and re-submit or to reject that article. This leaves much room for subsequent revision to address the concerns raised. For instance, a manuscript which basically a literature review or a report of empirical research findings, even if well focused on the special section content, might receive such a decision. Or a manuscript which presents a very
recent narrative of practice in a setting that is inadequately disguised or otherwise risks a violation of the agreement might receive such a decision.

**Copy Editing/Proofing**

Once an article has been accepted for publication by the special issue editors, it enters the Copy Editing phase, which will normally be done by the Special Issue editors in order to avoid editing which makes unintended substantive revisions. Once the article has been copy edited, it will be proof read by the Journal staff and formatted for publication along with the rest of the content in that issue. It is then provided in draft form provided to the special section editors and authors in PDF format for a final proof reading, to ensure that there were no changes in meaning introduced in the copy editing and proof reading phases.

The special issue editors decide upon the order in which the articles will appear on the section and inform the Editor or Associate Editor for Special Sections. Authors and special issue editors would be empowered to make last minute changes only to issues related to copy editing errors or proof reading, not substantive changes. Once the articles are cleared for publication and the order of the articles in the special issue has been decided by the special section editors, they are paginated and readied for publication.

Special Section editors also provide an Introduction to the Special Section.

**Publication Date:** The Special Issue Editors in consultation with the Editor will consult about publication date depending on a number of factors. The issue of publication will **not** be indicated in the Call for Narratives.