Introducing the Journal Editors Discussion Interface

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Abstract

Journal editors play an important role in advancing open science in their respective fields. However, their role is temporary and (usually) part time, and therefore many do not have enough time to dedicate towards changing policies, practices, and procedures at their journals. The Journal Editors Discussion Interface (JEDI, https://dpjedi.org) is an online community for journal editors in the social sciences that was launched in 2021, consisting of a listserv and resource page. JEDI aims to increase uptake of open science at social science journals by providing journal editors with a space to learn and discuss. In this paper, we explore JEDI's progress in its first two years, presenting data on membership, posts, and from a members survey. We see a reasonable mix of people participating in listserv conversations and there are no detectable differences among groups in the number of replies received by thread-starters. The community survey suggests JEDI members find conversations and resources on JEDI generally informative and useful and see JEDI primarily as a community to get honest opinions from others on editorial practices. However, JEDI membership is not as heterogeneous as would be ideal for the purpose of the group, especially when considering geographic diversity.

Keywords

open science, scholarly publishing, community, social science

Introduction

Changing the academic ecosystem is difficult and requires all stakeholders to do their part and work together (Rhys Evans et al., 2022). Within this ecosystem, journals have considerable capacity to incentivize and shape scholarly behavior. Their influence offers a broad opportunity for disciplines to take a more intentional approach to open science. Open science is "*An umbrella term reflecting the idea that scientific knowledge of all kinds, where appropriate, should be openly accessible, transparent, rigorous, reproducible, replicable, accumulative, and inclusive, all which are considered fundamental features of the scientific endeavour*" (Parsons et al., 2022).

Research communities in different disciplines have begun to develop stronger norms for openness (Silverstein et al., 2024), including psychology (Button et al. 2013; Nosek et al., 2015; Levenstein & Lyle, 2018; Nosek et al. 2022), economics (Christensen and Miguel 2018; Miguel et al., 2014), education (Makel & Plucker, 2014; Cook et al., 2018; Gehlbach & Robinson, 2018; McBee et al., 2018; Fleming et al., 2021), political science (Lupia & Elman, 2014), public health (Harris et al., 2018; Peng &

Hicks, 2021), science and technology studies (Maienschein et al., 2019), and sociology (Freese, 2007; Freese & King, 2018)[5].

Scholars are socialized into their respective research community, inculcated with the belief that they are building on and contributing to a group endeavor (Merton, 1949, 309-316). Research is a communal, cumulative endeavor in which scholars learn from each other (Bird, 2014; National Academies of Science, 2019, p24). The validity of a set of findings depends on researchers correctly applying methods for collecting and analyzing data. When scholars "show their work," other members of their research communities can evaluate their descriptive and causal inferences. Hence scholars have a responsibility to make their work evaluable, including making their research transparent and sharing the data and materials that underlie their findings (Elman et al., 2018; Elman & Lupia, 2016).

Notwithstanding its potential to deliver a range of benefits, the shift towards open science remains a work-in-progress. Open science advocates have argued that changing research culture requires following multiple strategies, including: developing initial infrastructure to make open science possible; creating more sophisticated and fine-grained tools to make open science easier; increasing the visibility of open science practices to show that they are customary and expected; generating incentives to reward open science, including linking it to publications, funding and hiring; and institutional stakeholders requiring the researchers they serve to use open science practices (Nosek, 2019; Mellor, 2021). Different institutional stakeholders can influence how research is conducted by pulling on one or more of these levers, including funders, disciplinary associations, data repositories, universities, and publishers and journals.

Indeed, several of these stakeholders have already encouraged open science practices. For example, US government entities such as the National Science Foundation (2011, 2019, 2023), the UK's Research Excellence Framework (used to allocate public funding for universities' research, www.ref.ac.uk), and the European Parliament (2019) and Commission (2023) encourage research transparency and data sharing. Many academic associations' ethics guidelines (e.g., the American Anthropology Association (2012), the American Sociological Association (2018)), as well as those of the National Academies of Science (2019) now encourage scholars to adopt a range of open science practices. Governments, foundations, and public universities in Latin America have fostered a vibrant culture of open access, with between 50% and 90% of periodical articles published in the region appearing open access through platforms such as SciELO and RedALyC, typically as "diamond" open access, i.e., without any charges to authors or readers (Alperin, 2015, pp. 10-17).

Among the different institutional stakeholders, journals are some of the most influential institutions in the academic ecosystem (Silverstein et al., 2024). This influence has not always been beneficial. For example, it is now widely acknowledged that journals' preference for publishing positive findings helped to incentivize questionable research practices (Christensen et al., 2019). But it is this capacity to incentivize and shape scholarly behavior which offers a broad opportunity to promote transparency and reproducibility.

Editors are particularly influential actors in the academic ecosystem because they are a major vehicle for organizing and disseminating academic communications, promoting knowledge, and producing

success signals for individual researchers (Elman et al., 2018). Editors make judgments about the content of their publication and shape their field's substantive trajectory. Because they also implement processes for reviewing, revising, and publishing research, they decide how their publication will address fundamental questions raised by the shift towards open science. As part of this engagement, editors have multiple opportunities to facilitate and instantiate open science, including: directly mandating relevant practices via author guidelines; providing information to authors in FAQs and other guidance documents; offering the means to reward openness via badges; and operating as exemplars for other journals as well as the research communities they serve more generally (Silverstein et al., 2024).

If editors have so many opportunities to facilitate and instantiate open science, does this mean they are leading the way? TOP Factor is a metric that reports the steps that a journal is taking to implement open science practices (https://topfactor.org). Out of the 3,200 indexed journals, 2,412 (75%) receive a score of 0 out of 30 (with 30 being the highest score for implementing open science practices), and only 36 (1%) receive a score of 15 or over (TOP Advisory Board, n.d.). So, despite their potential for influence, many journal editors have not fully embraced open science practices. Naaman et al. (2022) surveyed journal editors on their capability, opportunity and motivation to implement TOP guidelines, and found that the majority of editors did not see implementing TOP as a high priority compared with their other editorial responsibilities. They also identified several barriers to implementing open science policies, practices, and procedures, including a lack of time and resources. This can be especially difficult for editors when considering open science policies that have field- or methodology-specific nuances. For example, data sharing considerations in the social sciences can be more complex due to the use of human subjects data and resulting concerns ensuring identifiable and/or sensitive information about participants is not made public. Data management personnel are very familiar with these concerns, and there are several considerations and solutions that can be implemented through a variety of data repositories. However, journal editors may simply not have the time to search for relevant resources, or the connections to have helpful conversations with experts on this topic.

Editors with easy access to information and expertise are better positioned to make well-founded decisions at their journals that will encourage authors to adopt open science practices. While editors have multiple potential sources of information and expertise, two may be especially useful. First, editors benefit when they can communicate easily with each other to consider the difficulty, merits, and implications of change. Second, editors may benefit from the expertise of other institutional stakeholders. In the case of data sharing and research transparency, editors stand to gain considerably from interactions with domain repositories and other members of the data management community with experience and expertise in practices related to research openness (Crosas et al., 2018, 18f.). For instance, data professionals are developing a range of mechanisms to facilitate the responsible sharing of sensitive research data, of which editors should be aware, and be equipped to suggest to authors (Harvard University Privacy Tools Project, 2020; Kamath & Ullman, 2020; Levenstein et al., 2018; Wood et al., 2020).

Despite the clear merit of these types of exchanges, it can be difficult for social science journal editors to participate in such dialogues. There are limited opportunities for them to share information with

each other and other stakeholders in the academic ecosystem, pool their collective wisdom, or make their hard-won expertise available to their successors and other new editors. This multifaceted communication gap slows the development of new editorial knowledge and prevents the emergence of what could be a powerful sense of community both among editors, and across institutional actors who share the goal of incentivizing robust social science, including data sharing and research openness. The Journal Editors Discussion Interface (JEDI) (https://dpjedi.org) was created to help fill this gap.

The current paper

In this manuscript, we provide an overview of JEDI's history, its aims, and activities, and then describe data on three different aspects of JEDI, for the period ranging from its official launch[6] in March 2021 to March 2023. We present data concerning membership, activity on the mailing list, and from a community survey conducted a year after launching. Based on these analyses, we then consider JEDI's successes and areas for improvement. We hope these details are instructive for others seeking to create structures to promote institutional change towards a more open science.

History

The Qualitative Data Repository at Syracuse University, together with other repositories from the Data Preservation Alliance for the Social Sciences (Data-PASS), previously received an EArly-concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER) grant from the US National Science Foundation (NSF, Grant #2032661) to establish a proof-of-concept for JEDI, an online community of social science journal editors and data professionals that focuses on open science. Data-PASS – a voluntary partnership of organizations created to archive, catalog and preserve data used for social science research – has a strong, multi-year record working with journal editors to encourage open science practices. Prior to the launch of JEDI in 2021, Data-PASS's engagement with journal editors stretched back to 2016, with a series of annual workshops focused on open science themes.

While these workshops were helpful in sharing information about open science with the attending editors, they suffered from some limitations. First, the workshops were only occasional events, while the challenges that editors face are ongoing, constantly changing, and need real-time responses. Second, the workshops were mostly structured to follow an 'outside-in' model of communication, with the bulk of the time taken up with presentations by repository personnel to journal editors. While the editors appreciated the expertise being provided by the repositories, during the relatively brief discussion periods, journal editors were very eager to share their knowledge and experience with each other, and to be especially open to learning from the shared experiences of their peers. JEDI addresses both of these shortcomings, providing an opportunity for continuous editor-to-editor engagement.

Aims

JEDI aims to facilitate convergence and consensus on key principles of open science, encourage adoption of a common language and set of norms, and contribute to the generation of innovative solutions and a fund of collective knowledge. Given the many demands on editors' time – and given that most editors face similar processual challenges – there is great value to their interacting with each other about these key issues, and pooling their collective wisdom, sharing lessons, examples,

insights, and solutions. The benefits can be further multiplied if experts on relevant topics are included in the conversation. JEDI seeks to generate that interaction and those benefits through building an online community of social science journal editors and "Scholarly Knowledge Builders''. Scholarly Knowledge Builders are experts in topics relevant to journal editing. When founding JEDI, the representatives from the data repositories that form Data-PASS were the original Scholarly Knowledge Builders, but one aim was to expand this to other open science experts and metascientists studying peer review. Bringing together editors and Scholarly Knowledge Builders encourages and facilitates continuous communication and learning.

JEDI combines features of an online forum and a traditional email listserv. JEDI predominantly (but not exclusively) focuses on the aspects of the editorial process that concern data and code, and their management, citation, and accessibility; other aspects of research transparency; and reproducibility, replication, and verification. However, members are free to post about anything concerning editorial functions. This can include "day to day" concerns (e.g., how to secure reviewers), big picture questions (e.g., what does the future of publishing look like), and anything in-between. Even when open science isn't explicitly the topic of conversation, links can often be (and often are) made. For example, when discussing how to secure reviewers, someone may suggest having an open call for reviewers on a journal landing page (which advances transparency and diversity), or how reviewers may be more likely to accept requests if they are being asked specifically to review something relating to their expertise (e.g., the data and code reproducibility package).

By offering journal editors the opportunity to draw on the expertise of other editors and Scholarly Knowledge Builders, JEDI aims to augment the readiness of the social science publishing community to generate and adopt best practices for open science. JEDI offers the editors and editorial staff of social science journals a shared forum in which to ask and answer questions, pool information and expertise, and build a fund of collective knowledge. At the beginning of 2021, a dedicated community manager (PS) was hired to build and manage JEDI. The online community takes the form of a Google group, which has the benefits of a traditional listserv, but discussion threads are also archived and searchable online.

Activities

JEDI launched in March 2021. We have invited hundreds of social science journal editors (predominantly current, outgoing, and incoming editors from top journals across the social sciences [anthropology, criminology, economics, education, environmental science, geography, political science, psychology, and sociology]) and Scholarly Knowledge Builders to join JEDI. To help sustain momentum, we have invited some members to help "catalyze" conversation by posting on the listserv on specific dates when things are a bit quiet. We have aggregated conversations in a biweekly newsletter, summarizing threads, inviting input, and highlighting resources. We have curated resources from those recommended by members on the JEDI listserv to share on our website (https://dpjedi.org/resources), including those on best practices in open science. This resources page brings together materials for editors in a way that is accessible and easily digestible. As it is crowdsourced through conversations on JEDI, it ensures we are covering topics of interest to this group.

In addition to the Google group and resources page, JEDI seeks to continue the earlier Data-PASS tradition of organizing workshops, and has so far hosted two workshops on issues around open science in journal editing (2022: https://dpjedi.org/events/may-the-force-be-with-you; 2023: https://dpjedi.org/events/jedi-2023-annual-meeting). In addition to this, in 2022, PS led a hackathon to work on "*A Guide for Social Science Journal Editors on Easing into Open Science*" which has now been published (Silverstein et al., 2024).

JEDI policies, procedures, and practices are decided on by an invited steering committee (meeting twice annually) consisting of the community manager, the associate director, editors of seven social science journals (currently covering anthropology, criminology, economics, education, political science, psychology, and sociology), and representatives from the repositories currently taking the lead on organizing JEDI (Databrary, Harvard Dataverse, Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [ICPSR], The Roper Center for Public Policy, and Qualitative Data Repository [QDR]).

Method

The data used in the following analyses were obtained in three different ways, outlined below. A detailed description of all variables used in these analyses, and how they were obtained, can be found at https://osf.io/q7s5m. An anonymized version of the datasets and code to reproduce all analyses and figures is available at https://osf.io/sh5ry/.

Membership data

The community manager collects and curates data about all new JEDI members using both the information each member entered into the JEDI signup form and publicly available information. These data are used to maintain a list of JEDI members and include (but are not limited to) each member's name and contact information, the date when they joined JEDI, the institution or organisation they are associated with, journals they currently edit or have edited in the past, and their main field or discipline. Based on this information, we can obtain the variables used in this analysis, including member join date, role, members' location, members' field or discipline, members' presumed gender, and member type. A detailed description of how these variables were obtained can be found at S1.1.

Google group data

We obtained this data through Google Takeout, which provides an MBOX file. We also used the list of members in the Google group, which can be downloaded directly from the webpage. We used a python script to extract the MBOX data, and R to clean the data into a dataframe containing information on each post.[7] Variables obtained using this method for these analyses include linking variables (email addresses), post-level variables (subject, post text, posting date and weekday, and the post's order in the thread), thread-level variables (thread subject, a thread ID, the total number of posts in the thread), and several timing variables related to when the posts were made (e.g., how long threads remained active for). A detailed description of these variables can be found at S1.2.

Community survey

In March 2022, we designed and launched a community survey in order to solicit impressions from the JEDI community. We asked members about their current editorial position or role (e.g., editor-in-chief, data professional), how long they had been an editor at any journal, and how many different

roles they had held. We then asked about the informativeness and relevance of the listserv and resources page, as well as the helpfulness of listserv replies. Finally, we asked our members where they currently went to get help and learn about editorial practices, how important different community features were to them, the interestingness of different topics that have been explored, and which challenges our members would like help solving. In total, we received 126 responses — a reasonable response rate of 28.6–32.9 percent, based on our estimated membership of 382–440 members at the time — with 125 responses being included in the analyses.[8] This estimate was obtained by including only members who joined before 31 August 2022, when data collection for this community survey ended. We explain the uncertainty in our membership numbers in the next section. The project was approved and classified as exempt by the Syracuse University Institutional Review Board (IRB #: 22-047). A copy of the complete survey, with all questions, can be found at https://osf.io/8zhmr.

Data exclusions

In any community, including JEDI, members come and go — and we would like this to be reflected in our data. Although we can now identify members who have left, unfortunately, we cannot know exactly when this happened. Here, we dealt with this issue in two ways. First, where we describe JEDI's current membership as well as show membership numbers and characteristics over time, we only included data on those members that joined during the target period (before or during March 2023) and were still members as of July 2023 (N = 417). Prior to this date, we did not have a procedure in place to track the ebb and flow of members, so it is possible that some members who have left the group between March and July of 2023 (and would otherwise be included in this dataset) are not present. However, we feel that this subset of our data is the best reflection of what our membership looked like during the target period.

The second way we dealt with the issue of members who have left the group applies to any result or visualization that relates to posts on the listserv. Because posts made by members who have left are still included in this dataset, we chose to keep those members in our data for those analyses. In those cases, the number of unique members included in the analyses is 479.

Results

JEDI membership

JEDI membership has grown at a steady pace (+13.5 members per month on average) since its official launch[9], both through active recruitment and organically, increasing from 79 members in March 2021 to 417 members in March 2023. Based on the first word of each member's name — genderize.io[10] determined 49.4% of JEDI members to be men (n = 206) and 44.6% to be women (n = 186), indicating good gender diversity (Figure 1). JEDI is also diverse in terms of its members' principal fields or disciplines, which span a large number of social sciences as well as other sciences, the humanities, and research-supporting fields like library sciences, data & research infrastructure, and publishing. The largest disciplinary groups stems from Psychology with 29.0% of JEDI members (n = 121), followed by Political Science with 15.8% (n = 66), Economics (10.3%; n = 43), Anthropology (8.4%; n= 35) and Sociology (7.0%; n = 29; see Figure 1 for a full breakdown of JEDI member's fields). There is room for improvement in terms of geographic location, however; JEDI members are highly concentrated in the

Americas (65.0% (n = 271); 60.7% (n = 253) in the US alone), and Europe (25.9% (n = 108)). Only 9.1% of members are not in Europe or in the Americas.

In line with JEDI's mission, most members of JEDI are editors (86.6%, n = 361) — that is, they have held or currently hold an editing-related position at one or more journals — while 13.4% (n = 56) are non-editors, primarily in the field of Psychology (23.2%; n = 13) and Data & Research infrastructure (21.4%; n = 12).
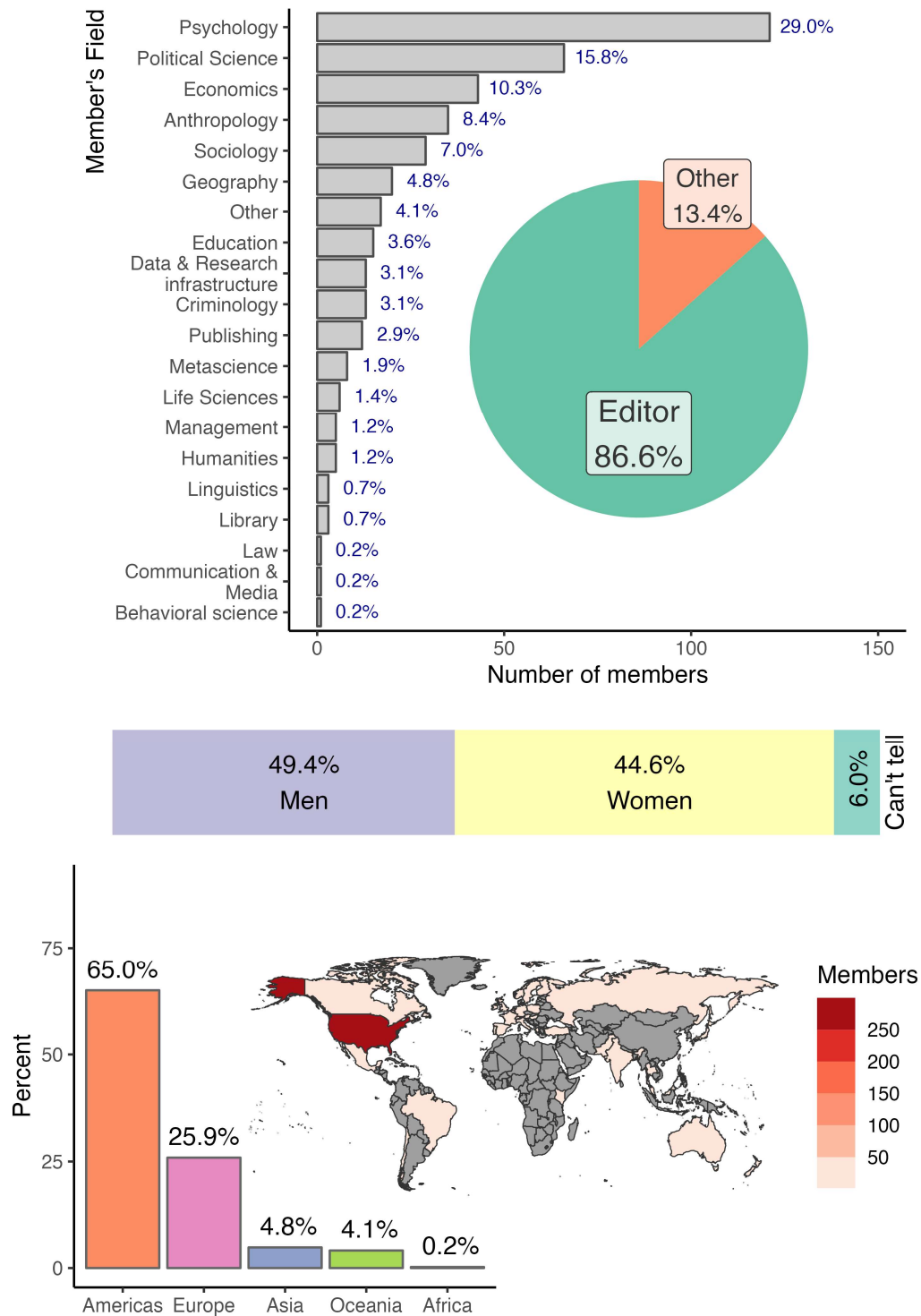
Figure 1. JEDI Membership at a glance

Listserv posts

All data and numbers in this section include everyone who was a member at any point during the target period (N = 479). After excluding newsletters and the initial "How to use JEDI" post, from March 2021 until March 2023 (inclusive, 25 months), there were a total of 674 posts on the JEDI listserv within 181 threads, giving an average of 7.2 new threads and 27 posts each month. The median thread length was 3 [*IQR* = 4], or one thread starter and two replies (Figure 2).
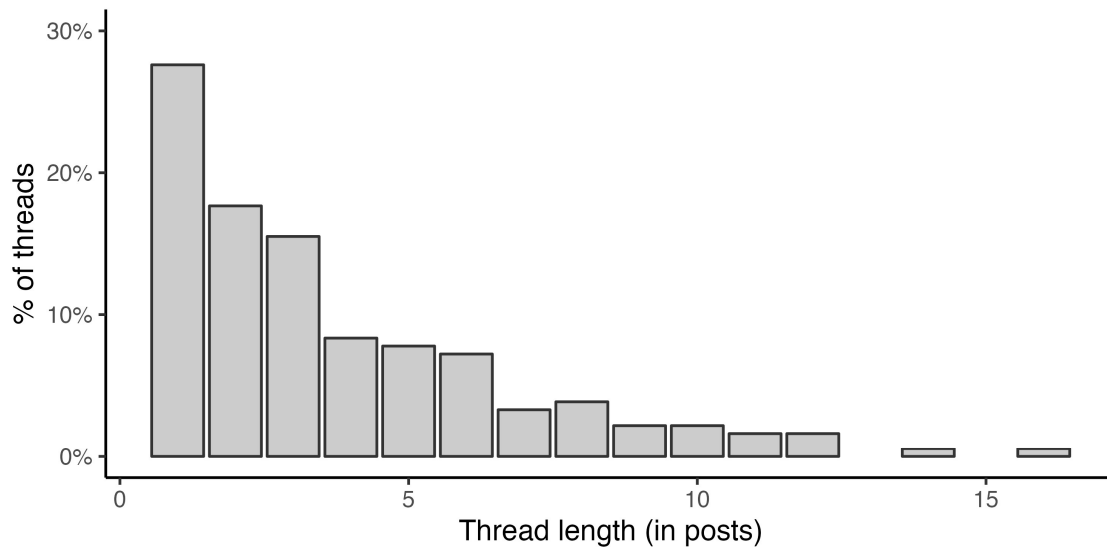

Figure 2.Histogram showing the length of JEDI threads. Under 30% of threads get no replies, while most threads get at least few replies.

Thread "lifespan" — that is, the time between the first post, or thread starter, and the last post on the same thread — is quite varied. Threads that received at least one reply, had a median lifespan of 5.85 days, with lifespan ranging from 19 minutes to 50 weeks (IQR: 2.75 weeks).

Posting behavior over time

Posting frequency varies from month to month, with clear drops during the northern hemisphere summer and holiday months. Overall cumulative posting was similar across both years (Figure 3), although the end of the second year saw a drop in posting frequency, possibly related to the transition period between Community Managers.
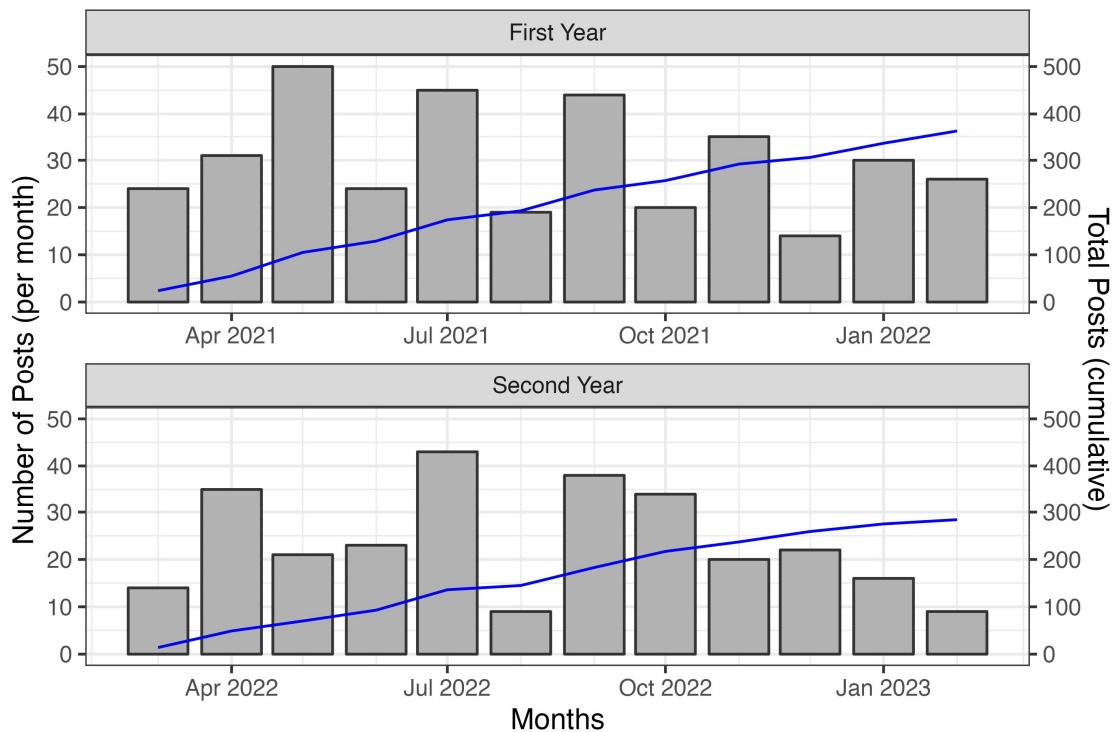
Figure 3. Posts per month over JEDI's first and second years (left axis), and cumulative posts (blue line, right axis) across each year. March of 2023 (28 posts) is not pictured to allow for a more direct comparison.

Discussion topics

JEDI discussions cover a variety of topics. The most popular threads (those with at least ten replies) during this time period were: *How to arrange book reviews* (16 posts), *Should all papers be published?* (14 posts), *Positionality statements*, *Maximum word limits in papers*, and *Independently managed journals* (12 posts each), *Triple masked reviewing*, *Open data checking*, and *How to preserve sensitive data* (11 posts each). A full list of topics on JEDI in the target period is available at https://osf.io/q6ah5.

Member engagement and posting behavior

JEDI as a community aims to welcome both members who actively participate in the discussion and those who prefer to observe from the sidelines. This is reflected in our membership's posting behavior: 68.3% of JEDI members (n = 327) have never posted to the listserv. Out of the 31.7% who have, 10.9% have both started a thread and replied to an active thread (n = 52), while 16.9% have only replied to other members' threads, and a small number of users have only ever started a thread but never replied to any posts on JEDI (4%; n = 19).

Posting behavior by member type

As a relatively young community, JEDI still relies on its team members and "catalyst" users to maintain engagement. Figure 4 shows the number of unique active users — those who have posted at least once in that month (first panel, *Med* = 18) — and the total number of posts (second panel; *Med* = 25)

over the target period. The bottom panel shows the true proportion of each member type in JEDI, making it evident that both JEDI team members and catalysts are overrepresented among active users and post authors. Despite this, regular members are clearly still participating in the conversation, and are doing so totally unprompted. It is worth noting that, although they are often prompted to post, JEDI team members and catalysts also write unprompted posts. The proportion of each type of user stays relatively stable over time, potentially indicating that soliciting posts is still important for generating engagement at this stage.
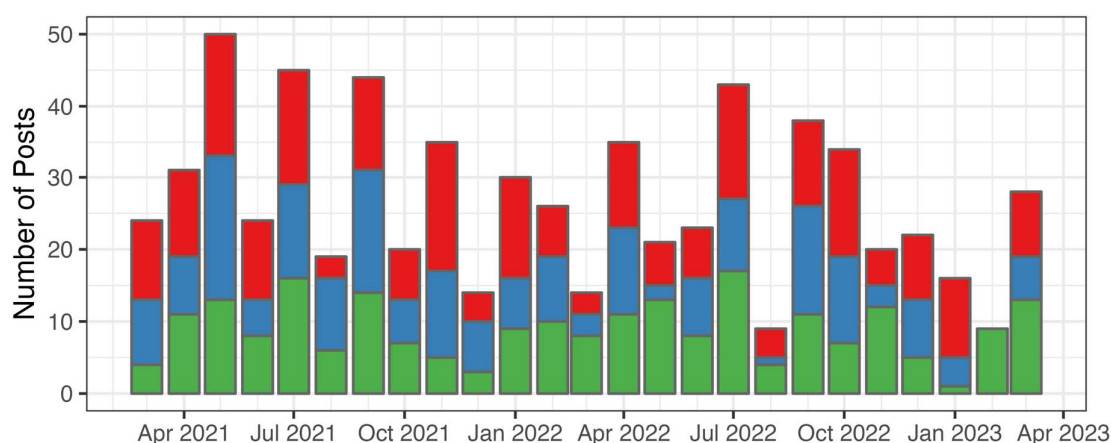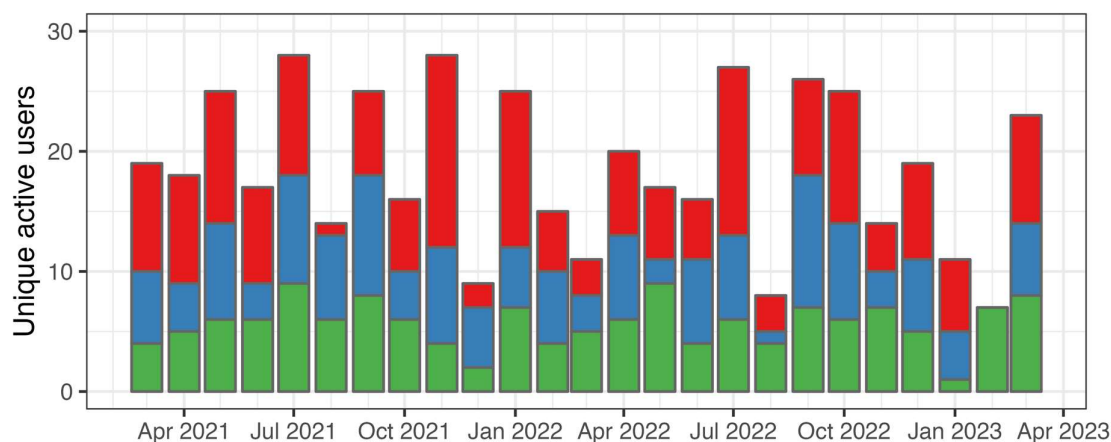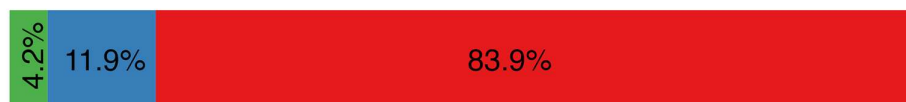
Figure 4. The top panel shows the number of unique active users each month of the target period; the middle panel shows the total number of posts each month; and the bottom panel shows the proportion of each member type in the dataset. N = 479.

Poster representation on threads

Are some groups more likely to start or contribute to threads than others? We look at this by comparing the "population" distribution of different groups on JEDI — the group of all 479 people who were JEDI members at some point during the target period — with the distribution of those same

groups in users who started threads or who made any post in the mailing list during the target period. Those proportions are shown in Figure 5.
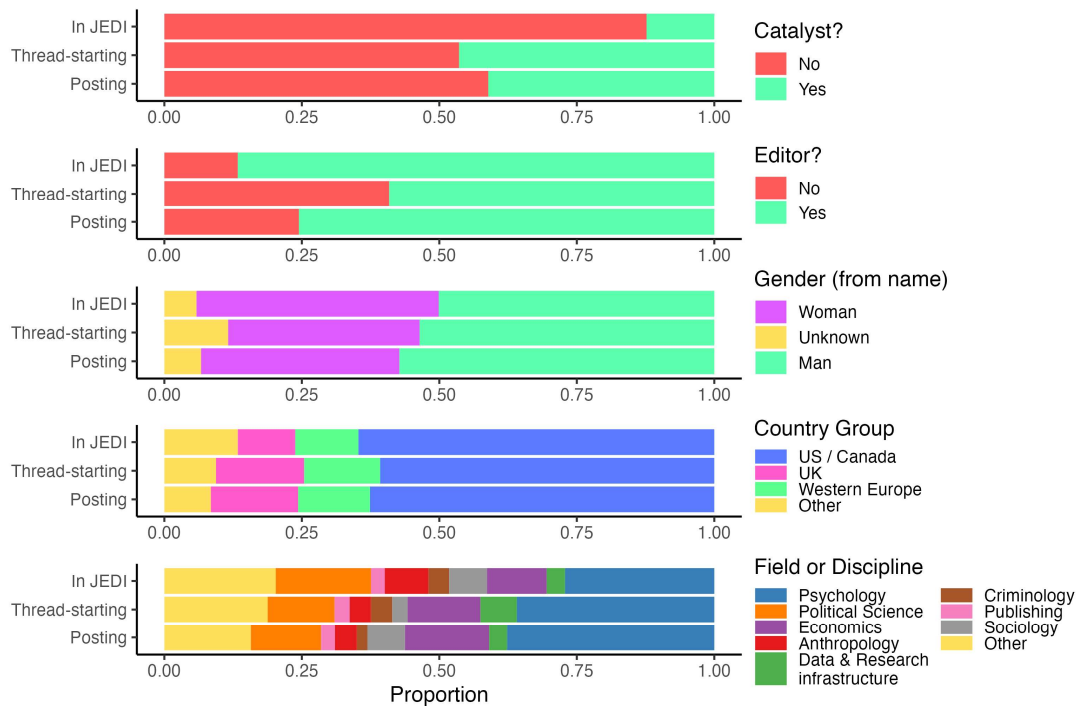

Figure 5. Proportion of different groups (from the top: whether a member is a Catalyst, whether they are an editor, the gender associated with their first name, the country in which their main institution or organization is located, and their primary field or discipline. For each plot, the top bar represents the proportion among all JEDI members during the target period, the middle bar represents users who started a thread, and the bottom bar represents users who made a post on JEDI, whether or not it was a thread starter. Respective Ns = 479, 182, 675.

Catalyst members are clearly overrepresented both in those who start threads and respond to threads. This is not surprising; the aim of the catalyst program is to stimulate conversation in the community, and it is clearly working well. The fact that many people who are not catalysts are also participating is encouraging. Together with Figure 4, this suggests that, although catalysts (and JEDI Team members) are still initiating many of the conversations on JEDI, they are not the only ones doing so, and at least part of the conversation is being driven by other members. Further, the fact that a catalyst member started or responded to a thread does not automatically mean the thread was prompted; many people who are invited to become catalysts were already more active within JEDI, and so have a tendency to start more threads and participate in conversation more than regular members.

The second panel of Figure 5 shows that, although non-editor members are in the minority, they are overrepresented among thread-starters and, to a lesser extent, posters. This probably reflects JEDI's history, as many JEDI members who are not editors are members of data repositories, and work in

data & research infrastructure or metascience. We see this as one of JEDI's main advantages — not only do editors get to hear from other editors in similar fields, but they also have access to others with valuable knowledge about editorial practices.

In terms of gender, men are slightly overrepresented in starting and responding to threads, but not by much. This seems to be a general trend in online discussions (e.g., Jarvis et al., 2022) and not so pronounced at JEDI as to demand attention.

Geographic region groups seem relatively evenly represented as well, although it is clear that most of the traffic on JEDI is generated by its US-based member majority. While this is not a problem per se, a more diverse mix of geographic regions would be an asset for the JEDI community. It is slightly worrying that countries outside North America, the UK, and western Europe seem to be underrepresented in thread starters and posters, which may suggest that not only are JEDI members concentrated in the "Global North", but that members in other regions of the world are not participating in JEDI exchanges as much. We further discuss steps to promote this in the discussion.

Finally, different disciplines seem to be appropriately represented in thread starters and posters. Data & Research infrastructure folks are overrepresented in thread-starters, which probably reflects Data-PASS's close connection to JEDI and data repositories' continued stewardship of JEDI — representatives of five data repositories in the social sciences sit on JEDI's steering committee alongside the seven social science representatives, and regularly post on JEDI. Psychology is also overrepresented; We speculate on why that may be in the discussion.

Overall, Figure 5 shows a mix among different groups, suggesting JEDI is succeeding in facilitating the transfer of knowledge among its members.

Associations with number of replies on a post

Starting a post on JEDI is often a way to seek out information from one's peers, so we were interested in exploring whether there are any factors related to the thread starter's characteristics that are associated with the number of replies received by a given post. As these are exploratory, post hoc analyses, the results of any statistical tests should be taken with a grain of salt. Visual inspection of the means and bootstrapped confidence intervals displayed in Figure 6 reveals very little difference in the average number of replies among subgroups, which is confirmed by one-way ANOVAs (all $ps > .05$). That is, given our current data, we cannot detect any differences in the number of replies received by a given poster based on characteristics of the thread starter.
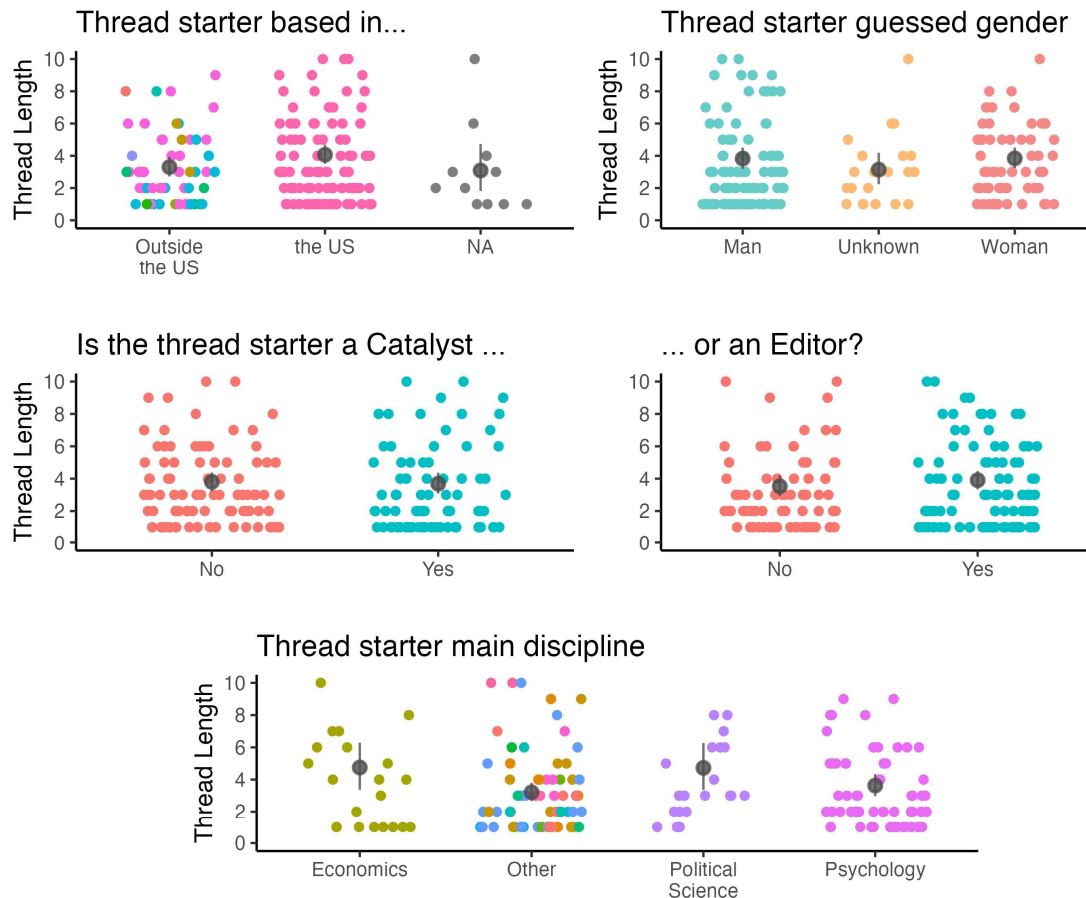
Figure 6. Thread length plotted according to the characteristics of the thread starter. Average thread length (gray dots) with bootstrapped confidence intervals show no relevant differences among groups.

Community survey

Respondents to this survey tended to be experienced editors, and more active than the average JEDI member. In terms of their current roles, Editors-in-Chief, Co-Editors, and Associate Editors made up over 86% of respondents. Participants also reported experience in multiple editorial roles — over 70% had held 2 or more roles — and many years of editorial experience — almost half of participants had held editorial roles for 5 years or more (a detailed table with the responses can be found at Table S1). Additionally, in the community survey sample, 57.5% of the respondents reported never having posted to JEDI (vs. 68.3% of all JEDI users, the number obtained directly from the data), suggesting that this sample of JEDI members may be biased towards more active members.

Responses to the community survey also indicate that this sample of JEDI members holds very positive views of JEDI and its usefulness. JEDI's informativeness, relevance to their field, and helpfulness was rated highly by participants: across 5 questions, the median response was four on a five-point Likert-type scale where 1 = Not [informative/relevant/helpful] and 5 = Very [informative/relevant/helpful].

When indicating where they go for help with editorial questions from a list of nine presented options, the JEDI listserv ranked second in number of mentions, with 62, behind only "emailing colleagues" (85 mentions). Among the spontaneous, write-in answers, there were around 10 mentions of asking others with relevant knowledge (e.g., "ask other journal editors", "editorial advisors", "talk to the publisher", "prior editors at my journal"). Additionally, being able to get honest opinions from people about editorial practices was rated highest in importance (Med = 5 on a 5-point scale) among six aspects of JEDI. When taken together, these answers suggest JEDI members prefer to obtain information on editorial practices directly from exchanges with knowledgeable others. Detailed statistics and the distribution of responses to all questions can be found at S2.6.

In terms of conversation topics on JEDI, "the future of publishing" emerged as the most popular of topics presented to respondents. Other topics like finding reviewers, publication decisions, data and code sharing, open peer review, and fraud and fabrication, were also quite popular. Interestingly, several participants indicated that the topics "preregistration and registered reports" and "data and code sharing" did not apply to them. Other topics mentioned in an open-ended question included open access, diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) issues, preprints, and the relationship between journals and publishers. Unsurprisingly, similar themes emerged when participants were asked about specific challenges at their journals they would like to overcome: challenges related to increasing the diversity of reviewers, authors, and editorial board members; implementing data sharing policies and other transparency policies at their journals; and the implementation of open access publishing and its ramifications. Detailed statistics on respondents' interest in different topics can be found at Table S3.

Discussion

An online community of editors and representatives of other institutional stakeholders in the research cycle has now been established through JEDI. The discussion group offers members the opportunity for continuous dialogue. Overall, JEDI is meeting its objectives of promoting conversations among journal editors in the social sciences, with a particular focus on open science. In its first two years, JEDI membership has grown steadily, and the frequency of posts has stayed stable across both years. Topics discussed reflect the breadth of responsibilities of editors. They range from technical or workflow issues – How to find reviewers? How to facilitate data sharing? – to more fundamental questions such as the value of positionality statements or the feasibility of different publication models for journals. This wide range of topics also underlines the case for a community-based approach: no individual point of contact could provide knowledgeable answers (let alone multiple perspectives) on these topics. The majority of JEDI members are editors and editorial staff of social science journals. To support editors with questions concerning data and research transparency, personnel from the data services and open science communities – for example, representatives from digital repositories that safely store, publish, and preserve digital social science data – also form part of JEDI (Scholarly Knowledge Builders). The current balance between editors and Scholarly Knowledge Builders makes it clear that the group is *for* editors, with Scholarly Knowledge Builders being a minority of membership.

Our data suggests the conversation is still primarily initiated by JEDI team members (those on the JEDI steering committee or JEDI staff) and JEDI catalysts. However, because catalysts are also more likely to have been more active all along (even before agreeing to become catalysts), it is hard to say whether we would see a different pattern without the catalyst program. In spite of their roles, both JEDI team members and catalyst frequently make unprompted and spontaneous posts, which suggests JEDI is self-sustaining. There is also a sizable and steady proportion of regular members who participate in JEDI's discussions.

Although the majority of JEDI members have never posted to the listserv, we do not see this as particularly problematic. Data on attrition points to inactive JEDI members finding the group worthwhile to be a part of: each email includes a link to unsubscribe from the list, but only around 10% of members have ever left the group. Another 3% each choose not to receive emails (but still be able to access the listserv content), or to receive a regular digest of all emails, respectively.

Overall, the listserv seems to be working well. We see a reasonable mix of people participating in listserv conversations and there are no detectable differences among groups in the number of replies received by thread-starters. The community survey suggests JEDI members find conversations and resources on JEDI generally informative and useful and see JEDI primarily as a community to get honest opinions from others on editorial practices, as intended. It is reassuring that in only two years since launching, JEDI was considered by those who filled out the survey to be almost the top place to go for help with editorial questions, behind only emailing colleagues.

JEDI membership is not as heterogeneous as would be ideal for the purpose of the group. There is low geographic diversity, with over half of members residing in the United States. We continue to seek to expand the geographical diversity of membership. In 2022, we began an outreach program to encourage membership from editors based in the Global South and have since sent out invitations to those journal editors, resulting in a slightly increased proportion of new members from the Global South. We plan to increase and extend our outreach program further by systematically creating and maintaining a database of journal editors in other regions and inviting them to participate.

Unequal representation among different disciplines is less stark. Although the plurality of JEDI members are from psychology, they make up less than a third of membership. The high percentage of JEDI members from psychology could be because psychology has been one of the social science disciplines leading the way for some aspects of open science. It could also be because both JEDI community managers have a psychology background, naturally impacting on their networks when recruiting new members. Finally, the relative size of disciplines may also play a role. In the US, e.g., there are almost three times as many faculty members in psychology as in political science, the second largest discipline both in JEDI and in US social science faculty (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023). As part of JEDI's outreach program for 2024, we plan to preferentially invite editors in social sciences that make up the smaller groups in JEDI as well as expand our recruiting efforts to adjacent disciplines (e.g., behavioral sciences, law). We will continue to monitor and make efforts to raise JEDI's profile globally and across the other social sciences.

Strengths and limitations

Our use of different methodologies to understand how our community works gives us a more three-dimensional picture of our strengths and where we still have to make improvements to better serve our community. In addition, our open survey materials and code can be adapted by others for use with their own communities. However, there are several limitations to the data we have collected and the conclusions we can draw. Firstly, we are limited by the many variables that we didn't investigate, with regards to all three types of data (membership, posting, community survey). For membership, we are limited by the information we gather upon sign-up, and what can be easily coded based upon publicly available information. This means that we do not, for example, have data on members' actual (non-inferred) gender, career stage, or the journal impact factor of the journal they are editing for. For posting, we have not coded the content of posts, and instead only use automated strategies for gathering data from Google Takeout and so cannot know whether anything about the content of the posts themselves is driving the number of replies. In addition, the number of replies is our only variable indicating the "success" of a particular thread, but the number of replies could indicate many things. It could be that there's just a very clear answer to some questions, and so there isn't a need for more discussion. However, as JEDI's aim is to facilitate discussion, we still believe that number of replies is a somewhat useful metric.

The data from the community survey are limited in several ways. Firstly, although we obtained a high response rate, around 30 percent, it is likely that the sample who completed the survey is biased. For example, a higher percentage of people filling out the community survey had previously posted on the listserv compared to the percentage for overall membership. We also had some evidence of inattentive responding (e.g., missing and/or internally incompatible responses), suggesting we take the results of the community survey with a pinch of salt. As the purpose of our community survey was to get quick feedback from members on a variety of aspects related to JEDI, we weren't able to get to much depth on any of the individual topics. For example, we don't have any information on *why* members would rather email colleagues about editorial questions than post on JEDI. This point also relates to a bigger open question, which is that we do not have any data on why many members never post on the listserv. The answer to this would be very important for JEDI strategy, as it is important to know whether members are satisfied "lurking", or whether there is something that would make them more likely to post.

Challenges and future directions

Despite JEDI's success, there are still a number of challenges that we will need to consider moving forward. The issue of geographical diversity is an especially important one that needs to be resolved in order for JEDI to meet its goals, as ensuring science is equitable and inclusive is an important facet of open science[11]. To this end, we will continue to adapt our Global South outreach program with the aim of increasing the diversity of JEDI membership. We will also make further efforts to increase field diversity of our membership and will make active efforts to invite more Scholarly Knowledge Builders with relevant expertise to join JEDI in order to help increase the helpfulness of replies.

Another issue is the time-limited nature of editorial positions, in that they are usually only for a few years, after which someone else will take over at the journal. Although many editors edit at several

journals over their career, there are many who end their positions and then are no longer editors. When we have reached out to members who have left the group about why they have left, this is the most common reason (that they are no longer an editor). We make clear in our correspondence that we welcome previous editors too, in order to preserve this institutional knowledge, but this is a big ask from someone who will no longer necessarily be benefiting themselves from the discussions and resources. A related issue is that of identity – although we have not collected data on this (it would be very interesting to do so), it is likely that most of our editor members have many other identities that they hold closer than that of "editor" (e.g. scientist, a member of their individual discipline [e.g. sociologist], academic, researcher). And even if editors do identify as editors during their term, many may no longer identify with this once their term is up.

Lastly, for many of the issues discussed on the listserv – particularly those related to open science – there is no consensus on best practices. This is further complicated by field and methodological considerations among such a varied group. Our resource collection is growing rapidly, but the current static website is not fit for this purpose. Sections are created organically based on conversations, but this is not systematic, so there is unequal coverage for different topics. One of our solutions to this has been to create "A Guide for Social Science Journal Editors on Easing into Open Science" (Silverstein et al., 2024) that aims to come to some consensus through input from editors and SKBs across the social sciences. In addition to this, we have secured further funding to develop resources where they are currently missing.

Conclusion

JEDI has been successful since launching in March 2021. However, there are still many improvements that can be made. We stress the importance of actively working to enhance diversity and inclusivity in any organization looking to make science more open. Communities of practice (Wenger 1999) have played an important role in fomenting change towards a more open science. JEDI, as a community, did not emerge organically but was purposefully created: given the costs of community building and the already significant workload of most journal editors, efforts that bear the costs of building and sustaining communities can play an important role in helping them emerge and endure. The growth and sustained activity in the JEDI listserv demonstrate the relevance of building structures that facilitate open communication and consultation among stakeholder groups within the scientific ecosystem. Professional associations (such as the European Association for Science Editors [EASE] – https://ease.org.uk/) can play a similar role, but most editors in the social sciences fulfill their role part time and for a limited period of time and are thus unlikely to pay to join a dedicated organization. Loosely organized communities such as JEDI can help to fill this need. As open science practices become more established, they are also becoming more complex and their implementation more nuanced. Community-based groups such as JEDI that allow for communication and consultation among stakeholders are an essential component of building the capacity for working in this complex environment.

Ethical statement

Funding statement

Data accessibility

The anonymized data and a data dictionary can be found on the OSF at https://osf.io/sh5ry/.

Competing interests

PS and JGB are paid consultants on the grants that fund the Journal Editors Discussion Interface, CE was the original PI on both of these grants, SK is the current PI on both grants. The authors have no other competing interests to disclose.

Author contributions

Priya Silverstein: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing. **Julia G. Bottesini**: Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Visualization, Investigation, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing. **Sebastian Karcher:** Writing - Review & Editing, Supervision, Funding acquisition. **Colin Elman**: Conceptualization, Writing - Review & Editing, Supervision, Funding acquisition.

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Endnotes

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[5] For an overview of open research resources and case studies across disciplines, see the UK Reproducibility Network's Open Research Across Disciplines (https://www.ukrn.org/disciplines/, adapted and extended from Farran et al., 2020)

[6] JEDI was already a group with a few dozen members (but no posts) before its official launch in 2021, so membership at the outset was not zero.

[7] While the MBOX data contains identifiable information and cannot be shared, the extraction scripts are included with the data for this article.

[8] One of the participants completed the survey but did not check the box consenting to participate, and their response was therefore excluded from all analyses.

[9] Prior to its launch in March 2021, the JEDI Google group had several dozen members due to initial sign-ups from Data-PASS workshops from 2016 to 2019.

[10] We used genderize.io to guess each member's gender (see S1.1 for full details on this process). We must note that this is very far from an ideal way of determining members' genders, and that it is falsely dichotomous. However, we didn't collect information about gender upon sign-up to the group, but we believed it still important to have some sense of whether or not the group was dominated by male members and/or interactions due to gender asymmetries in editing (Liu et al., 2023).

[11] It is important to note that we lacked comparison data regarding the actual percentages of editors in the social sciences based in different countries.