



Dr. John M. Sloop
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Dear Dr. Sloop,

I am writing to apply for the position of Editor-Elect at the *Journal of Applied Communication Research (JACR)*, slated to assume duties in 2026 and oversee the volumes for 2027-2029. I am an Associate Professor of Organizational Communication at Wayne State University (WSU), and have served on the *JACR* Editorial Board since January 2021. As per the call for applications, you are looking for a candidate with a strong research profile and editorial experience well-suited to *JACR*'s distinctive qualities, along with relevant project management experience and an innovative vision for the journal. In this letter, I will elaborate on why I believe I am the right person for this position.

Research Profile

Among communication journals, not just those published by the National Communication Association, *JACR* is unique in its emphasis on the applied and practical facets of communication research across diverse contexts. This distinction has long resonated with me, given my professional background and evolving research interests. Prior to obtaining my MA from Bowling Green State University (2009) and PhD from Purdue University (2013), I worked for four years in the business broadcast news and public relations fields in India. This industry background cultivated in me, from the start, a keen appreciation of the intersections of theory and praxis. As a result, I pursued research projects that were grounded in everyday problems, issues and needs facing communities and stakeholders, while challenging and extending current theories explaining social phenomena. My dissertation, for instance, was one of the earliest works by communication scholars examining the complex meaning making of so-called “green jobs” by the “sustainability workers” who practiced them, across a variety of sectors. Resulting publications from this project extended theorizing on how communication shapes the often-tensional process of finding work meaningful and the discursive positioning of everyday work in emerging professions. Since then, I have remained committed to applied research that is shaped by, and often in partnership with, impacted communities—a deeply held value that is supported by WSU, where I have been since 2013 and obtained promotion and tenure in 2019. WSU is Michigan’s only urban public research university, and is on a small list of institutions that received both “doctoral university - very high research activity” (R1) and “community engagement” classifications from Carnegie.

My [current research interests](#) focus on organizing for environmental health/risk, resilience, entrepreneurship among underserved communities, and the communicative negotiation of work/professionalism among precarious workers. My published work has drawn not only on organizational communication research, but theories and methods from public relations, environmental communication, health and risk communication, media and technology studies, and rhetoric. While I primarily employ qualitative methods, such as interviewing, ethnography, focus groups and arts-based research, my problem-centered approach to research has led to several productive collaborations with scholars specializing in quantitative methods and from disciplines outside communication. For instance, in 2022, I partnered with WSU colleagues Stephanie Tong (*listed as a reference*) and Elizabeth Stoycheff on a project examining how Asian Americans, who were subjected to online harassment and hate speech during the COVID-19 pandemic, practiced resilience communication. The study drew on my theoretical knowledge of resilience, along with my colleagues’ expertise in social media, hate speech and large-scale

survey research, to further understanding of how stigmatized minority groups can use specific strategies, while other tactics become less relevant. Published in *JACR*, the article was the journal's top-cited article in the last 12 months, with 2,357 views and an Altmetric score of 62. Collaborating with a WSU colleague in Civil & Environmental Engineering, we obtained a prestigious "People, Prosperity and the Planet" (P3) grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to monitor urban groundwater systems using green stormwater infrastructure (GSI). For my portion of the larger project, I worked with PhD and undergraduate students from engineering, anthropology, communication, and education, consulted with local community groups to gather user information on GSI use and perceptions, and designed multi-media material to foster awareness of groundwater health risks and encourage GSI adoption. A manuscript detailing our fieldwork and community engagement is currently under review at the interdisciplinary journal *Environmental Research*.

I am a staunch advocate of designing and implementing research projects in collaboration with impacted communities, where possible, and translating research outcomes in formats and forums that are widely accessible. I launched the [Detroit Water Stories](#) project in 2018, partially funded by an internal WSU grant and an extramural grant from the Waterhouse Family Institute for the Study of Communication and Society, to examine the communicative structures and processes of collective action by grassroots organizers mobilizing for water affordability. Working with a team of undergraduate and graduate students, I engaged in a 2.5 year long collaborative ethnography, which included social advocacy for and with community partners in both online and offline contexts. The project was recently featured by Stacey Connaughton, Director of the Purdue Policy Research Institute at Purdue University, in her chapter in the 2024 edited volume *Public Scholarship in Communication Studies*, edited by T.J. Billard and S. Waisbord. (*Dr. Connaughton is listed as a reference.*) In addition to gathering rich data on the resistive strategies used by marginalized populations in the Global North, the Detroit Water Stories project gathered archival video footage and produced webisodes, protest/advocacy material, newspaper op-eds, and oral histories that were shared with community partners, participants, and the WSU Reuther Labor Archives. Thus far, the project has resulted in two journal publications and two award-winning book chapters. Moreover, I have given invited talks on public scholarship and research translation, based on these and other projects, at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), University of Michigan, University of South Florida, and University of Oregon, among others.

To summarize, I believe my commitment toward applied, community-engaged, interdisciplinary and impactful research makes me a suitable candidate for the Editor-Elect position at *JACR*.

Editorial Experience

I also have significant editorial experience. To date, I have edited one scholarly book, a special section ("symposium") of an academic journal, and a special forum of essays in an academic journal. In 2015, I coedited with Patrice Buzzanell at the University of South Florida (*listed as a reference*) a [special forum](#) of *Management Communication Quarterly* on "organizing/communicating sustainably." The forum, comprising 37 pages of the 167-page issue, solicited four essays from eight U.S.-based and international scholars to theorize how communicative practices were key to "organizing" environmental sustainability. In 2018, I coedited with a colleague in political science a "Symposium" of the journal *Critical Sociology* on "social institutions and sustainability," which was based on an in-person event we hosted at WSU the preceding year. The 2018 [symposium](#) comprised of six full-length articles (similar in length to a regular issue of *JACR*), contributed by scholars of communication, political science, sociology, anthropology, environmental studies and management, along with an essay by the guest editors outlining a

“transdisciplinary research agenda” on the topic. The following year, my coedited book with James McDonald (University of Texas at San Antonio) was published by Routledge—[*Movements in Organizational Communication Research: Current Issues and Future Directions*](#). The book was designed for organizational communication practitioners and emerging scholars, and accordingly addressed key topics of theory and research through a lens that was intergenerational and personal. Each of the 15 chapters was coauthored by 2-3 scholars, one “senior” and one “emerging,” who provided a state-of-the-art review of their topic and described how/why it resonated with(in) their lives. In its sixth year of production, the book continues to be widely assigned in organizational communication graduate seminars throughout the country, and we have heard from multiple faculty members and students how they appreciated this applied and personal lens to research. In addition, I serve on the Editorial Boards of *JACR* (since January 2021), *Human Relations* (since June 2018), *Management Communication Quarterly* (since November 2014), *Women’s Studies in Communication* (since January 2016), and *Communication Studies* (since January 2024), and am an advisory board member for the journal *Society & Management Review* published by the Indian Institute of Management at Kozhikode (since April 2019). Till 2023, I was Chief Editor of *Organizational Communication in the News*, an online teaching and learning resource that I founded in 2011, featuring case studies for organizational communication, public relations and management studies. Each of these editorial and reviewing experiences have provided me with valuable lessons to lead *JACR*—for instance, how to engage a diverse body of authors and reviewers, provide timely and compassionate feedback to authors, work with publishers and copyeditors to move manuscripts from draft to final stage, and a deep appreciation of how strategic curation of topics and manuscripts can make for a final product that remains relevant long after its initial publication.

Relevant Project Management Experience

My project management experience includes organizing various events/conferences, leading teams and committees, and implementing planned items at both my university and in professional associations, like NCA and the International Communication Association (ICA). At NCA, I chaired the 25-member strong Awards Committee of the organizational communication division (2021-2023), distributing as many as 10 awards, and helped steer the division during a crisis related to DEI concerns with the rest of the division’s executive committee. I have chaired the Early Career Scholar Award committee of the ICA’s organizational communication division (2019), served on the advisory board of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Great Lakes Marine Debris Action Plan (2020-2024), and on the planning committee of the Superfund Research Program annual meeting organized by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) (2023). Since 2022, I have been the Research Translation Coordinator of the \$11.3 million NIEHS-funded [*Center for Leadership in Environmental Awareness & Research*](#) (CLEAR), leading a team to facilitate science communication workshops, train CLEAR researchers in investigator-initiated research translation, organize an annual thematic symposium, design and manage the CLEAR website and social media platforms (viz., X, LinkedIn and YouTube), and create multiple platforms for community engagement (e.g., story-driven animation videos, infographics and brochures, StoryMaps). I am also a co-Investigator on the superfund research center grant that helped establish CLEAR.

Within the WSU Department of Communication, I have led search committees for tenure-track hires, organized the Bernard L. Brock Memorial Lecture series and Summer Doctoral Seminar featuring nationally renowned communication scholars, served as the Area Head for the Communication Studies unit (comprising around 10 full-time faculty), and am currently serving as the Interim Director of Graduate Studies (with expectations of being confirmed to a full term in Fall 2025). As Graduate

Director, I am responsible for ensuring the smooth operations and sustainability of our PhD program, MA program (with 4 concentrations), and 4 graduate certificates, while working closely with departmental faculty, administrators in the WSU Graduate School, and of course our 33 PhD students and 43 MA students. I count the following among my chief accomplishments in these roles: revising our program descriptions on the department website, co-leading the department's social media updates to highlight faculty and student accomplishments (on LinkedIn and YouTube especially), organizing mentorship and professional development programs for graduate students, strengthening program assessment procedures, and planning and implementing program revisions (currently underway).

Therefore, I have broad experience in several academic and professional contexts working with diverse stakeholders to conceptualize, design, enact and evaluate projects, from start to finish. As Editor-Elect, I hope to use my project management and collaboration skills, along with my expertise in social media marketing, to further bolster *JACR*'s impact and reputation.

Vision for *JACR*

My vision for *JACR* has three intersecting components—strategies to further build the journal's impact and reputation; strategies to augment the contributing experience for authors; and strategies to enhance the journal's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).

First, my strategies to extend *JACR*'s impact and reputation include:

- 1) *Soliciting special issues and/or "hot topic" articles from renowned scholars.* For instance, a quick scan of *JACR*'s most-cited articles suggests that topics related to crisis, health, politics, identity, and policy issues are especially impactful. New topics, perhaps not addressed as much in earlier issues of the journal, could include labor organizing, gender-based health and reproductive rights, and immigration policy. Author teams could plan, pitch to *JACR*, and write (if accepted) "forum articles," which could be a detailed think-piece reviewing relevant research and suggesting paths forward for researchers and practitioners. If they have high citational value, I will ask Taylor & Francis to publish articles to be published as open access for wider sharing.
- 2) *Soliciting translational review articles as a kind of JACR manuscript.* Currently, *JACR* accepts three kinds of manuscripts: empirical/research articles (9,500 words), field reports (5,000 words), and book/monograph reviews (unspecified word length). I will encourage contributors to also submit translational review articles (7,000-8,000 words) that describe the latest research on key issues while arguing for and/or recommending particular courses of action or policy. This will expand on the translational reviews focus of a forthcoming special issue, steered by the current *JACR* editor Heather Zoller. Translational review articles will be especially helpful for practitioners who might build on them to enact key programs/policies, while also potentially boosting *JACR*'s impact factor.
- 3) *Soliciting field reports from both academic and non-academic contributors.* I will continue and expand Dr. Zoller's introduction of field reports to the journal by encouraging contributors to share their personal stories and important lessons learned while doing applied research in various contexts. Field reports could also include accounts of research translation and stakeholder engagement, in addition to reports of data collection and analysis/write-up. Ideally, each *JACR* issue will comprise of (at least) one translational review article and one field report, in addition to original research articles that currently dominate *JACR*.
- 4) *Encourage JACR authors to craft translational versions for nonacademic platforms and audiences.* I will share *JACR*-branded resources for investigator-initiated research translation on

the journal's website, and encourage authors of accepted publications to create textual/visual/auditory translational versions that are more accessible by nonacademic audiences, like journalists or policymakers. These might include short white papers, publications for news media, infographics, or even short videos that *JACR* can share widely on social media and our website. I will particularly encourage authors to craft pitches for outlets like *The Conversation*, or to write opinion-editorial pieces based on their research for local/national news publications.

- 5) *Promote JACR via social media and leverage journalist connections.* With the help of a student hire, I plan to increase the journal's engagement on X/Twitter and create a new profile on LinkedIn, where academics have increasingly migrated over the last year to share research. Given *JACR*'s focus on applied research, having an active profile on a professional networking site like LinkedIn can also help share cutting-edge research with practitioners more directly. Finally, by working with NCA's communications team to identify journalists and beats that are particularly relevant to topics published in *JACR*, I hope to gradually build the journal's reputation for impactful and innovative research among news reporters and editors.

Second, related to enhancing *JACR* contributors' experiences, my goal is to facilitate timely and useful reviews. The journal receives a very high number of submissions (60-80) per month, and it is crucial to balance an efficient mechanism to process those submissions with a clear and compassionate response.

- 1) To accomplish this goal, I will use the bulk of editorial stipend to *hire 3-4 associate editors* with topical and methodological expertise that complements my own.
- 2) My team and I will encourage reviewers to submit their comments and feedback within *reasonable timeframes and offer constructive critique* even when they disagree with the contributing authors.
- 3) Cognizant of their time and labor investments, I will *celebrate and recognize our outstanding reviewers* through the journal's newsletter, social media posts, and in-person at the NCA annual conference.
- 4) I will also use the editorial stipend to *employ a graduate assistant to help with copy-editing final drafts* of accepted manuscripts (supplementing the assistance from Taylor & Francis), and creating/distributing the *JACR newsletter*.

The final component of my vision for the journal is reiterating and strengthening its commitment to DEI:

- 1) I am grateful to the prior editors of *JACR* for putting in place a *diverse, global and multicultural Editorial Board*, and I will work with them to identify gaps in expertise and standpoint that may be crucial for us to address. Working with the Editorial Board to solicit Associate Editors, I will strive to maintain a broad and diverse group of reviewers, board-members and Associate Editors.
- 2) I will also ask *JACR* reviewers to *consider how implicit biases might play a role in their reviews, and urge them to be open to alternative (yet rigorous) perspectives and engage in compassionate feedback*. To aid them, I will add information material and other resources on the *JACR* website on practicing inclusive and compassionate reviewing that reviewers might access. (I inaugurated this process at NCA's organizational communication division for awards selection, as Awards Committee Chair.)
- 3) I will *encourage contributing authors to include heterogenous and under-served samples, contexts, standpoints and methodologies* in their submissions to the journal. When soliciting articles, I will strive to include, listen to and work with a diverse set of authors and reviewers.



- 4) I am committed to *learning and reflecting on DEI best practices with the NCA leadership and other editors of NCA journals*, so that *JACR* remains an inclusive space for all kinds of authors and scholarship.

I want to thank you and the Publications Council for considering my application. *JACR*'s unique mission resonates deeply with my own lived experiences and values, and I will do my utmost to further its goals if I am selected to be its Editor-Elect. I commit to attend all NCA conventions for the duration of my term, observing and supporting NCA's publication policies, using the Taylor & Francis online system for manuscript processing, adhering to the NCA Policy on Affirmative Action and Nondiscrimination and the NCA Statement on DEI, and meeting *JACR* editorial deadlines.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions about my application.

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads 'Rahul Mitra'.

Best regards,

Rahul Mitra, Ph.D.

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