Evolution journal editors resign en masse

Over the holiday weekend, all but one member of the editorial board of Elsevier's Journal of Human Evolution (JHE) resigned "with heartfelt sadness and great regret," according to Retraction Watch, which helpfully provided an online PDF of the editors' full statement. It's the 20th mass resignation from a science journal since 2023 over various points of contention, per Retraction Watch, many in response to controversial changes in the business models used by the scientific publishing industry.

"This has been an exceptionally painful decision for each of us," the board members wrote in their statement. "The editors who have stewarded the journal over the past 38 years have invested immense time and energy in making JHE the leading journal in paleoanthropological research and have remained loyal and committed to the journal and our authors long after their terms ended. The [associate editors] have been equally loyal and committed. We all care deeply about the journal, our discipline, and our academic community; however, we find we can no longer work with Elsevier in good conscience."

The editorial board cited several changes made over the last ten years that it believes are counter to the journal's longstanding editorial principles. These included eliminating support for a copy editor and a special issues editor, leaving it to the editorial board to handle those duties. When the board expressed the need for a copy editor, Elsevier's response, they said, was "to maintain that the editors should not be paying attention to language, grammar, readability, consistency, or accuracy of proper nomenclature or

formatting.”

There is also a major restructuring of the editorial board underway that aims to reduce the number of associate editors by more than half, which “will result in fewer AEs handling far more papers, and on topics well outside their areas of expertise.”

Furthermore, there are plans to create a third-tier editorial board that functions largely in a figurehead capacity, after Elsevier “unilaterally took full control” of the board’s structure in 2023 by requiring all associate editors to renew their contracts annually—which the board believes undermines its editorial independence and integrity.

https://arstechnica.com/science/2024/12/journal-editors-resign-to-protest-ai-use-high-fees-and-more/