

Editor's Letter

My role as editor-in-chief is twofold: to help scholars bring their work to press and to publish content that scholars, educators, students, and practitioners will want to read. In addition to welcoming original research manuscripts, I also encourage the submission of systematic literature reviews, landscape criticism, and policy briefs. With this issue we introduce a new journal feature, “Perspectives from Practice.” Authors from any form of practice (public, private, academic, nonprofit) are invited to submit ideas for potential contributions. These short, personal essays will receive editorial reviews but typically will not be sent out for peer review.

As an academic journal editor, I see a wide range of writing efforts. Because *Landscape Journal* has a multidisciplinary audience, I always encourage authors to write in plain English. Writing simply is a much better way to convey complex ideas than expressing oneself in long sentences, which are more likely to be rambling, ambiguous, or syntactically garbled. An editor for *Science News* framed it this way: “When writing about science, don’t simplify the science; simplify the writing.” Writing clearly is also important when making an ethical argument, advocating for policy reform, or telling a compelling landscape story.

The writing workshop that I lead at annual CELA conferences is an opportunity to engage with authors and help them understand how their manuscripts can be favorably reviewed and subsequently published. Here is my top five list of writing pitfalls to avoid:

1. Excessive length, which usually results from an overly broad scope or an inappropriate amount of content for a journal article (see also 4 and 5 below).
2. Poor organization, which often signals an unfocused presentation of the research or argument.

3. Jargon (in the form of arcane technical terms and coined words), which can distract readers and disrupt flow.
4. Redundancy, which tends to weaken the argument by resorting to repeated claims and assertions.
5. Wordiness, in which the use of circumlocutions, passive voice, and unneeded adverbs make reading a chore.

These five hallmarks of poor writing tend to discourage readers and rankle peer reviewers.

A CELA Board member recently remarked that some articles in *Landscape Journal* appear as a “wall of text” that can deter visually oriented readers. Landscape architects are trained in the visual arts. Practitioners routinely use maps, diagrams, and photographs when analyzing landscapes and designing plans for land development, restoration, or conservation purposes. Yet many of the manuscripts submitted to *Landscape Journal* fail to capitalize on the power of a good graphic to help convey a discovery or insight or advocate for a point of view. Figures and tables enable authors to efficiently convey key spatial, temporal, and statistical information. Clearly written text, supplemented by illustrations, can effectively leverage both forms of communication.

Writing is a powerful form of expression and persuasion. If effective writing is important to the profession—and to its potential global influence—would it not be wise to give writing a prominent place in landscape architectural education?

James LaGro Jr.

P.S. It has been a pleasure collaborating with the guest editors for this special issue, Robert Corry (University of Guelph) and Charlene LeBleu (Auburn University).