Wizard of Oz analogy: is it appropriate?
   Publishing is like a trip along the Yellow Brick Road
   Emerald City = acceptance
   Editor as “wizard”
      Something mysterious
      Is the wizard all powerful, or something less?

Reality
   Journals are “owned” by the profession (literally or figuratively)
   Editors serve the community for a period of time
   Editors rarely have an agenda other than to serve the community as well as possible and publish the best possible papers, subject to a time constraint

Editors are busy people
   Usually have all the regular things to do (teach, conduct research, supervise students, administrate, write grant proposals, and publish) this is an add-on responsibility

Editor’s responsibility
   Gate-keeper or perhaps something like an air-traffic controller
   25-30% acceptance rate
   50-75% of papers are probably “publishable”
   How to choose which to publish?
      Rely on
         (1) opinion of editors
         (2) goodness of fit with journal aims and scope
         (3) bias for papers that “read well”
Structure of journal operations

Editors
Associate Editors (also busy)
Reviewers (also busy)
  Few incentives for reviewers or associate editors
  Few options to “enforce” the reviewing contract

Editor’s strategy
Editor’s goal (sadly): reject a paper
10% desk rejects
  Which get desk rejects?
    Those in obvious need of much work
      Weak analysis
      Weak writing
    Overly narrow subject without no generalizable
      methods/approach

Remainder?
  Assign best possible associate editors and reviewers
  Match subject matter and methods
  Pick reviewers who know the subject and will deliver good
    reviews on time
  Typically 2 reviewers
  Editors “tend” not to override reviewers
  Split decisions – how to resolve?
    Most editors would rather reject a good paper than
      accept a bad paper
  Associate Editor is often the tie-breaker (expert on topic)

Author strategy to Editor (Goal - get past the desk reject)
  Avoid small mistakes
  Get help with written English
  Make sure subject matter is aligned with core of journal
  Show that paper connects to a stream of research that has
    previously appeared in the journal
  Short and informative cover letter
Author strategy to Reviewers
Win over the reviewers (Goal – get to a R&R decision)
Be provocative without provoking
Be clear about the hypothesis/research question
   (half of negative reviews focus on this)
Be clear about your methods
   (the other half of negative reviews focus on this)
Negative reviews RARELY focus on the conclusions
Shorter papers are more likely to succeed. Why?
   Easier to read
   Easier to hold the reader’s attention
   Easier to maintain continuity
   Provides a clear succinct storyline
   “smallest publishable unit”
Avoid small mistakes
Get help with written English
Make sure your lit review is complete since the reviewer or
   Assoc Editor is likely to be someone familiar with the
   subject matter

Revise and Resubmit
This does not guarantee certainty of outcome
1/3 – ½ of R&R decisions are eventually rejected
Why? Failure to satisfy reviewers
5-10% reviewers recommend to accept and editor will reject.
   Why?
   perception of weak/incomplete reviews
   similar (better) papers in the pipeline
   lack of sufficiently broad appeal

Rejection
It happens to us all
If you are rejected, move on and don’t take it personally
Challenging a decision rarely works