

## How to review and get reviewed

*EASE workshop, Barcelona, Spain, 20 June 2011*

This EASE workshop addressed a key issue at a time of increased competition among academics wanting to publish their research in leading journals and journals wanting to publish the best articles.

Peer review has, in recent years and in all areas and disciplines, become a field of experimentation and discussion. Authors, editors, institutions, and governments are particularly interested in improving benchmarking processes for researchers, publications, and projects. Yet few seminars and workshops evaluate the peer review process itself and encourage reflection and discussion regarding peer review and scientific practices and ethics.

A short introduction by Arjan Polderman on the role of editors in peer review was followed by Reme Melero's demonstration of the peer review game, a kind of snakes-and-ladders designed for young scientists, who assume a range of roles and experience the dilemmas faced by authors, editors, and reviewers. Reme Melero and Ana Marušić then presented "The peer review process", which concluded with a practical session led by Ana, in which groups had to make decisions regarding ethical dilemmas faced by authors and journal editors. Participants could see for themselves how the limits between what is scientifically considered ethical and unacceptable are put to the test. This practical focus made the workshop particularly enjoyable.

A range of scientific and ethical parameters contribute to the complexity of the review process. Reviewing is largely an altruistic task which overburdened reviewers have to fit into a busy agenda. Although reviewers are often perceived as gatekeepers, their contributions enhance scientific output and academic rigour. The workshop also highlighted the gap between review processes in the experimental ("pure") sciences and the social sciences and humanities; research results in the latter have interpretative and even critical parameters that require specific benchmarking tools.

Peer review is crucial for both authors and publications, since its prestige and continuity depend on the availability of experts willing to review research articles. Reme

Melero commented that reviewers need to be prepared to tackle ethical issues, pointing to circumstances in which a reviewer should contact the editor or even decline to review an article. Also discussed was how to select the best referees, whether from among young scholars up-to-date on research or experienced researchers with a historical perspective.

Both Reme Melero and Ana Marušić pointed to review as one of the most fundamental aspects of journal publishing. However, the final word and ultimate responsibility is not with the reviewers but with the editor and editorial board. Reviewers effectively act as scientific consultants to the editor, who, as the person who best knows the focus, aims, and readership of the journal, makes the final decision on whether to publish.

Participants in the workshop included members of EASE, University of Barcelona librarianship and documentation students, lecturers, researchers, translators/editors, and editors of Catalan journals, who offered interesting contributions on practical issues faced in their daily tasks. The workshop covered basic concepts and instruments for reviewing and so was particularly useful for editors and publishers, especially in regard to ethical considerations. Less time was devoted to authors and how they can ensure they get to the review stage; nonetheless, a thorough understanding of editorial decision-making mechanisms is useful for developing article publication strategies.

Finally, how scientific journals are evaluated is a topic that could be addressed in a future EASE workshop.

Translated by Ailish MJ Maher.

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