GUIDELINES AND ADVICE TO AUTHORS, EDITORS AND REVIEWERS OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALS & CONFERENCE PAPERS

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Preface

This monograph was written for the purpose of providing guidance to those scholars and practitioners who would like to author a journal article, and for those who have been asked to serve as the editor or reviewer of a journal. These guidelines and suggestions are general in nature and, while intended for application on journals, may be adapted for use for any type of publication or proposals for conference presentations, etc. The sources for this work come from many different professional fields & organizations and were written in different languages. Throughout, reference is made to a journal called *THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ORGANIZATIONAL INNOVATION (IJOI),* for which I am currently serving as the Editor-in-Chief. These references are made to serve as an example.

No person or organization should adopt these guidelines wholly as written here, but should modify them to meet their unique needs. While every effort has been made to credit the original authors for their work used in this volume, it is likely, with the use of on-line sources, that errors of credit through citations have been made. For these errors, I apologize to the original authors.

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of independent research and in the preparation of research reports/journal publications. (Faccioni N.D.)

Advice To The Prospective Author

This chapter provides guidance to authors for the process of writing and submitting an article for publication. The first section provides a discussion of the primary components of an article with a description of the contents of each component. This is followed by a checklist of issues that should be considered by the author. Next is a checklist of the usual components required in the submission process of the article to the journal. This section concludes with some general advice to authors. It is highly recommended that aspiring authors also read the chapters for editors and reviewers in order to have a better idea of the editorial process and what the people serving in these roles will be considering in their review & decision making.

The Anatomy Of A Research Article

The essential components of the research article should be considered by researchers/authors in the process of planning, conducting and reporting of the research problem. Many of these components of a research article are essential considerations in the planning

The Nature Of The Publication

The nature of the material, its presentation style and its technical complexity will vary widely between publications intended for a scholarly or "popular" audience. Even amongst these two types of publication there will be differences in the nature of the material according to whether the article is found in a text, monograph series, journal series or conference proceedings, etc., and on whether or not the material has been subject to independent review prior to publication. It is possible, of course, to find essentially the same information published in both types of publications, in which case it is important to identify the primary source or reference, and to establish that it has been faithfully interpreted by different authors or over time. (Faccioni N.D.) Below are the usual components of an article. An * indicates and optional feature of a component.

The Title Page

The title page should contain the following components:

TITLE
AUTHORS, *Titles, *Academic Credentials & *Affiliations
DATE SUBMITTED FOR PUBLICATION
*KEYWORDS (important for on-line search engines.)

TITLE

The title of a research article will generally be limited by the publication process to no more than 80 characters. Nonetheless, the title must be informative as to the nature of the research and the treatments or groups of subjects involved. *Often a journal will also contain a "running title" or header of approximately 40 characters, which will appear at the top of each page of the article. (Faccioni N.D.)

AUTHORS

The surnames, initials (or given names), titles, academic credentials and institutional affiliations & email address - I often have to contact authors to ask for this information causing delays.

DATE SUBMITTED FOR PUBLICATION

Dates of submission and acceptance for publication may indicate the need for extensive review of the original manuscript, and may also be important reference points on topics which are either/both controversial or rapidly developing areas of knowledge. (Faccioni N.D.) It also provides the editor with needed information in tracking the editorial progress of a submission.

KEYWORDS

With the increasing availability of online search engines and research databases, the effective use of keywords is the only means of conducting a comprehensive literature search on your topic. The number of keywords will be limited by the publication (generally 5-8) but should be consistent with conventional use to enable effective integration into existing databases. (Faccioni N.D.)

*ABSTRACT

Read the author guidelines of the journal to determine if an abstract is required. Even if not required, include an abstract as it provides reviewers with an "executive summary" prior to the full review. The Abstract will generally be limited to 150-200 words, but must contain essential details of the purpose, methods, results and conclusions of the study. Often, in conference proceedings or on a database such as Dissertation Abstracts, the abstract will be the only source of information available, emphasizing the need for a concise but informative style for this aspect of the research article. (Faccioni N.D.)

*ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The article should acknowledge assistance from outside sources in the conduct of the research. This may include financial assistance in the form of a research grant, technical or other assistance from non-authors and even commercial sponsorship (the conduct of re-

search into effective management by a management consulting company does not imply any bias, but at least the association with the research should be clearly identified). (Faccioni N.D.)

THE ARTICLE NARRATIVE

The narrative section is the primary component of the article and should contain the following sections:

Introduction
Methods
Results
Discussion

For a more complete discussion of the components of the narrative, see the reviewer guidelines section and the section on how to critique an article.

Introduction

The Introduction should identify the purposes of the article in relation to others in the field. There may be need to incorporate a limited number of essential relevant references in this section, but this may not be the place for an extensive review of the literature. (Faccioni N.D.) Some publications may require a separate section for a Literature Review and others may not. In any case extensive literature reviews are another type of article and not necessarily part of a research article/report. However, a sufficient number of references should be given to provide the reader with the research foundation of the article.

Methods

The essential feature of the Methods section is that it should contain sufficient information to enable replication of the research study. Within this section it should be possible to identify the type of study which has been conducted, (i.e. cross-sectional or longitudinal; descriptive or experimental; case study or multigroup etc.). (Faccioni N.D.)

The number and any identifying characteristics of the subjects in the study should be clearly stated, along with the type and number of groups into which they have been allocated (if appropriate) (Faccioni N.D.). Any pre-test conditions which have been required of the subjects should be reported. Ethical considerations and procedures for subjects providing their informed consent for participation in the study should also be reported here (this may be a requirement for publication in some journals).

Data collection procedures may need to be described in some detail if they are unique or at least referenced to an alternative source if they have been utilized in previous research. Information related to the validity and reliability of test procedures; and a statement as to whether data collection is manual or automated should be provided if they are important to an effective understanding of the research process. In study where subjects complete multiple tests, the sequence of tests will need to be stated, and where tests or treatments are repeated, it will need to be clear as to whether allocation to tests was systematic or random. (Faccioni N.D.)

In evaluating test protocols, it is important to identify whether test methods are relevant/specific to the subjects under examination, and whether the tests reflect current knowledge. Assessment of test procedures utilized in the study will involve identifying whether the tests are conducted under field or laboratory conditions; whether there has been complete or only partial cover of relevant measurement parameters; and whether the units of measurement are appropriate. (Faccioni N.D.)

Description of the statistical methods utilized in analyzing the data merits special consideration in reporting on research results (Faccioni N.D.). The statistical methods appropriate to be used will depend on factors such as the number of subjects and groups; the type of data (continuous, by category etc); and the number and sequencing of treatments applied to the subjects etc. The statistical tests used in the analysis of results (t-test, ANOVA, Multiple Regression, Tukey HSD etc) should be identified and it is essential to state the level of probability accepted in determining statistical significance.

Results

It is possible to report results from a research study either independently or in combination with some discussion and interpretation or analysis of their potential impact. The method of choice may be prescribed by the journal concerned or may depend on the complexity of the study. Ethical considerations dictate that research results be reported in a form which retains subject confidentiality, regardless of how elite or otherwise interesting the subject(s) in the study may be. Certainly, special procedures will be required to obtain consent of the subjects to do otherwise.

Results may be expressed in a combination of text, tables and figures, but not necessarily in more than one form unless this is important for clarity. It is generally not necessary to duplicate tables and figures, but statements in the text can be used to complement either of these forms of data reporting. Figures are preferable to tables (a picture is worth a thousand words!), but both will require a concise, informative caption, and should be able to stand alone from the text. Statistical significance of results may be expressed in figures and tables, as well as in the text. Where it is appropriate, comparisons with existing data or expected results may be included with results from the current study, to provide a context for interpretation. (Faccioni N.D.)

Discussion

This section of the report is used to link the outcomes of the research to the purposes of the study, to the prior evidence referred to in the Introduction, and to future studies in related area(s). New and important results should be emphasized, but without simple restatement from earlier sections. (Faccioni N.D.) *A major function of this part of the report is to outline implications for policy and for changes to practice.* Stringent statistical analysis of research may, by itself,

underestimate the implications of small but important changes in performance parameters. Little things can and do make a difference! Examples of this may be where minor differences in performance can determine success in activities, or where even a small difference in performance applied over the long time period of an application may have a cumulative effect on the subject. For this reason it is sometimes appropriate to consider the "practice significance" of the results of the study independently of the formal statistical analysis, while accepting the limitations of extrapolating these results more widely. Finally, it may be appropriate to recommend further actions or other related research studies to confirm tentative results or to pursue related research problems.

References

References included in a journal article should be only those referred to in the preceding text, and will generally be limited to no more than 20 sources. It is important that all these references are the primary or original sources of the information cited. Secondary references such as reviews of literature, and particularly textbooks, should be avoided. The reference listing will generally be alphabetical. While the preferred format will generally be specified by the journal in its "Instructions to Authors", it is essential that sufficient information is provided to enable the source to be accurately identified by a reader. Reference citations within the text may include author(s) name(s) or a numerical tag identified within the reference list. (Faccioni N.D.) There are a number of acceptable referencing formats (i.e. APA), but it is essential that a consistent style be utilized throughout the article or report. The use of a particular style may be required by a particular publication and will be specified in the "Instructions to Authors". (Faccioni N.D.)

Manuscript Checklist

The checklist that follows provides information to help ensure that authors do not leave out important information in their manuscript. Unless the publication specifies different requirements, authors should include each of these components in the manuscript. * indicates a component that is typically optional. Additional relevant information on this topic may be found in a later section entitled Criteria for Judging Manuscripts and how to critique an article. Use this checklist to ensure that the manuscript meets the following criteria.

1. Completeness (AERA N.D.)

___ goals and objectives are clearly stated

___ purpose of the article is achieved

___ solutions are presented

___ presentation of the material is fully logical and coherent

___ information is succinct yet comprehensive

___ unnecessary information has been removed

___ ramifications are identified

___ significance of the information is apparent

___ importance to scholars, policy makers & practitioners is identified

2. Authoritativeness

___ occupational or disciplinary specific terms are explained or excluded

___ references are relevant to the topic

___ proportional mixture of author and others' works (AERA N.D.)

___ authorities from other fields are cited

___ all relevant sources are cited using the required style

___ information is up to date

___ sources of assistance are acknowledged

___ permission to use others' work is obtained

3. Expertness (AERA N.D.)

___ proper methodology is used

___ methodology has been applied appropriately

___ novel or new methodology is justified

___ reasons for using previously unused methods are sound

___ methods are presented clearly

___ methods can be replicated as identified

4. Singularity (AERA N.D.)

___ new information is provided or existing knowledge confirmed

___ unique, original, or new elements are clearly revealed

___ how old information may be used by others is stated

___ applicability to salient groups is identified

___ information that is presented is timely

___ information is specialized or generalizable

___ those who could use the information are identified

___ how the article improves or extends the existing body of knowledge

5. Quality (AERA N.D.)

___ article follows journal & style guidelines

___ correct grammar, syntax, spelling, and punctuation are used

___ nonsexist language is used

___ ethnic bias is absent

___ "handicapping" language is absent (e.g., the disabled)

___ information is presented in an orderly manner

___ jargon and esoteric terms are absent

___ communication is parsimonious

___ article has been proofread

___ original and copies have a clean appearance

(adapted from Matkin & Riggar 1991)

A Manuscript Submission Components Checklist

When submitting the manuscript to the publication, the following components should be included unless otherwise specified by the publication's instructions to authors. *indicates a component that may be optional – see the publication's guidelines to authors for exact requirements. You should always obtain and review the author guidelines for the journal you are submitting to and follow these guidelines closely.

____ Letter of intent to the journal editor (include article title, request for review, and general area where it may fit into the journal). Attach with a paper clip. (Trent, N.D.)

____ Title page (includes the article title, author's name, title and affiliation). Attach with a paper clip.

____ *Biographical sketch (includes a brief statement identifying the author, titles, academic credentials and affiliations. Other information may include major professional awards, offices held and/or contributions to the field). Attach with a paper clip.

____ *Abstract or executive summary (summarizes the article, usually in 150 – 200 words; the number of words allowed depends on the journal). Include keywords.

____ Article narrative should begin with the title of the manuscript, followed by the information to be communicated Trent, N.D.). The article's narrative should include all of the components discussed earlier in the section entitled THE ANATOMY OF A RESEARCH ARTICLE.

____ References (includes only those citations used in the manuscript as compared to a bibliography that includes other relevant sources although not necessarily cited in the article). Include a bibliography of all materials reviewed only if required.

____ Tables, figures, illustrations, pictures (includes original forms used in the article, but not necessarily the original printer-ready proofs or negatives).

____ *Permission to reprint (includes all signed documents giving the author permission to include previously published materials) (Trent, N.D.).

Additional Advice To Authors

1. IMPORTANCE OF A GOOD TITLE - Even a perfect article, one that reports an original observation clearly and concisely, suffers if an editor is unable to understand the significance of the work. An editor will almost always rely on the title and abstract of a manuscript to make a preliminary decision (prereview) about the appropriateness of the work for the journal in question and to choose referees. The title and abstract must convey the experimental approach, key results, and novel conclusions of the work. Excessively long and comprehensive titles and abstracts make the editor's job more difficult (ASCB.ORG, 2002).

2. IS YOUR WORK APPROPRIATE FOR THE PUBLICATION? – if there is any question, prospective authors should consult the editor in advance of submitting a manuscript to such a journal to establish if the work has a chance of success (Hanna, 1996).

3. PLAGIARISM OR DUPLICATE RESEARCH - With computerized manuscript tracking, TURNITIN and the ever increasing coordination of journal software, it is foreseeable that a reviewer will not only have access to online databases but also to similar manuscripts submitted to other journals, which makes the likelihood of detection much greater. Any author who deliberately attempts this type of academic deception may be "blacklisted" from future publication. (bmjjournals 2002).

4. USE REJECTION AS CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM – Many journals are peer reviewed (also referred to as "refereed").The review process is detailed in a later chapter of this text. Authors should read that chapter to see what reviewers (also called referees) are looking for. A large proportion of submitted manuscripts are rejected, often multiple times, before publication. Most academicians experience such failure and rejection. You should not take criticism as a personal attack; indeed, doing so may undermine your chances of success (Stake, 1986). Instead, use the feedback you receive in a constructive manner to revise the manuscript and resubmit it. If the rejection feedback makes resubmission possible, resubmit as soon as possible. Try to follow the reviewers' suggestions/requirements as closely as you can. If you do not follow a suggestions, you should explain why in the text or in the cover letter. If the rejection feedback suggests a new venue, make the suggested changes and send the manuscript to a new outlet.

Not all review suggestions are equally useful. Some may reflect the preferences of a particular journal reviewer. If there is no possibility of resubmission to that journal, you may be better off incorporating immediately the suggestions you deem appropriate and resubmitting your revised manuscript to a new outlet without further delay. If you perceive the reviews of your manuscript

contain sexist or racist assumptions or in other ways seem to be systematically biased against your research, it is appropriate to tell the journal editor of your concerns. Often, if your concerns sound legitimate, the editor will secure another review. (Matkin & Riggar 1991)

ADVICE TO THE EDITOR

I. The Roles Of An Editor

Education related journals usually employ busy academics to serve as editors whose charge is to: establish whether a manuscript is appropriate for the journal (pre-review); to select expert referees; to render a final editorial decision on the fate of the work; and to determine the order of submissions for publication. Thus, the editor serves many roles in the publication process.

The Pre-Review

Some submissions are rejected without formal review when the editor decides that the content of the submission is not within the scope of a journal or if it seems unlikely that a manuscript will pass muster with critical referees; this process is called "pre-review". It is the editor's responsibility to spare the author and potential reviewers wasted time and effort in considering a manuscript that is inappropriate for the journal. If in question, prospective authors should consult an editor in advance of submitting a manuscript to such a journal to establish if the work has a chance of success. Referees also have day jobs, and it is the editor's role to identify appropriate and responsible reviewers (ASCB.ORG, 2002).

The Editor as Facilitator

Most colleagues are honest and fair and can be counted on for a timely return of a constructive critique. Editors will often cultivate groups of such cooperative reviewers who are appropriate for the areas for which the editor is responsible. This is done to facilitate a professional and timely review of submissions. Unfortunately, some colleagues cannot be counted on for fair and impartial judgments. Typical antisocial behaviors include excessive delays in returning critiques, vague and judgmental decisions, impossible and excessively detailed demands, and even the occasional breach of confidentiality where the referee transmits privileged information to a colleague or student. Referees who display such behavior must be avoided (ASCB.ORG, 2002).

It is also the case where some reviewers do not return their reviews in a timely manner thus slowing down the entire review & submission for publication process. These reviewers should be given "due process" by first being reminded to return their reviews, then warned by the editor that their unprofessional behavior may result in their dismissal from the review process, and finally, if warranted, dismissed from the reviewer list or from the board of editors. Sometimes, due to personal or professional demands, the reviewer may

request to be removed temporarily from the active list of reviewers and not to have submissions sent to them. There should be a limit to this time period as the reviewer will still be listed as a reviewer in the publication, but not doing any of the work!

The Editor as Judge

Some of the most competitive journals have the unfortunate habit of consulting far too many referees. Whereas two opinions may suffice, usually three or more are sought by editors. This may be because the editor may be unwilling to exercise independent judgment in weighing the merits of two divergent opinions. Or they simply want the benefit of additional reviews to enhance the quality of published articles. However, sending the submission to four or more reviewers has the effect of increasing the burden on responsible reviewers who are deluged with requests and it increases the prospect that an antisocial referee will be consulted. (ASCB.ORG, 2002). It will also very likely slow down the review process.

When the article reviews have been returned, the editor must use professional judgment to weigh the opinions and make a determination of the next action to be taken in the publishing process for publishing. There are a number of options: a. publish as is, b. make minor editorial changes & publish, c. return to author for revision, or d. reject the article (usually done when all review are negative. Some decisions are clearly positive or negative, but most rely on the editor's judgment. Many reviewers prioritize their criticisms. The editor must determine if the most serious flaws in a manuscript can be rectified by changes that are well within the scope of the author's capability. In some circumstances, such as requiring the conduct of a component of a study again, the required change may not be feasible. Although some publication decisions rest on one or more flaws identified by both reviewers, most often this is not the case, and one reviewer may identify a serious issue not considered by the other. For this reason, a conscientious editor will read and weigh the merits of each opinion, and then decide which issues will form the basis of a final decision. Some difficult decisions are best left to the day after the critiques are first considered. Sometimes another opinion or reviewer may be sought. In some cases, the author may demonstrate that the reviewers' comments were inaccurate. A good rule of thumb is that all referees should be reconsulted when the revisions take more than three months to complete. (ASCB.ORG, 2002)

The Editor as Compiler

The editor must exercise judgment in determining whether a submission will be published. There is, however, a more important role for the editor. What type of articles should be in a particular journal? What is the order of the publications in the journal and how is that order established? Ultimately, the editor of a journal will determine what will be the "niche" of the journal. The editor should

consider the constituents of the journal. (Hanna, 1996)

The decision letter is an opportunity for the editor to place reviewers' criticisms in the context of a field or the scope of the journal. Conscientious editors will interpret, and not merely repeat, the bottom line of a referee. Key criticisms should be highlighted and an honest appraisal of the prospects for favorable consideration of an amended manuscript should be spelled out. Authors are not well served by false encouragement. If a manuscript is in principle publishable, but not in the journal under consideration, the editor should suggest an alternative venue. (ASCB.ORG, 2002)

In some cases, the author may choose to contest the decision of a editor. These cases can usually be handled by a polite response from the editor or, in the event of an irreconcilable difference, through the intervention of a senior editor or it may be presented to the Board of Editors. Experienced authors avoid invective in posing questions to the editor. In some cases the editor may choose to forward comments directly to the reviewer, thus it is wise to avoid questioning the integrity or intelligence of someone whose judgment you wish to challenge. Some authors' first reaction is to phone the editor to secure some promise of compromise. However, a written record of communications between an author and an editor is an essential element of any successful negotiation. Authors and editors are often friends and colleagues. A healthy relationship ensures the vigor of the peer review system. (ASCB.ORG, 2002)

The Editor as Steward

The editor of a journal should consider the journal's audience. An academic journal has several constituencies, and any one subscriber may belong to several of these groups at the same time. The most concerned constituency consists of the aspiring authors, who may need publications to keep their jobs or receive promotions. The unfortunate truth is that these victims of the "publish or perish" syndrome usually receive little credit for clearly communicating research results, and have little motivation to rewrite an article a dozen times just to make it understandable to more readers. (NCFR, 2004). Another constituent group consists of scholars and practitioners who want to keep up with research in the field. This group may have the training to understand some types of research, but not necessarily all types of research and theories. For a particular journal there may be an enormous range of theoretical models and statistical methods used. Few, if any, people are competent to understand all of the models and methods used in articles in this type of journal. (Hanna, 1996)

The editor should be faithful to the mission and purpose of the journal. The leaders of the organization sponsoring or publishing the journal usually have a vision of the organization. They may wish to serve the needs of academic researchers or practitioners or both. This vision should be transmitted very clearly to the

editor and board of editors. Discussions of the purpose of the journal should be discussed periodically between the publisher and the editors. This vision/mission should then be shared with the board of Editors and reviewers.

In some cases, practitioners may have been dissatisfied with the organization's research journal because it does not meet their needs. There may be pressure for a journal to publish more applied or "how-to" articles, or practitioners may simply tolerate the organization's research focused journal without much enthusiasm. In some organizations, practitioners may stop reading the journal because they do not feel they benefit from the overly "academic" articles published in the journal. (Hanna, 1996; NCFR N.D.)

The Editor as Writer

One of the tasks of the editor is to make research articles readable. If the journal has the goal of making every article accessible to both scholars and practitioners, the editor should ensure that the board of editors and/or reviewers consists of both scholars and practitioners. It is the role of the editor to make it more likely that articles will be read by both academics and practitioners who often do not bother to read long, boring articles outside their narrow areas of specialization or interest (Hanna, 1996). Some ways to enhance readability are:

1. The length of articles should be carefully considered. Except in extraordinary cases, there should be no more than 6,000 words in the main body of a research article. Depending on the use of graphs and other figures, this will limit articles to 20 to 30 pages in the journal format. Often however, limitations of the publisher require shorter articles. The length of the various types of submissions (i.e. articles, commentaries, book reviews) should be discussed by the editor and the publisher and should be clearly specified in the instructions to authors. Practitioner oriented journal typically have a word length restriction much lower (i.e. 1,500 – 2,00 words).

2. Every theoretical model and statistical method should be explained in a way that any intelligent person can understand.

3. No numbers should be presented in the main body of an article unless they can be made meaningful to any intelligent person. All statistical results should be included in the manuscript submitted for review, but, with advice from the reviewers and the editor, more technical material would be included in endnotes and appendices. Particularly long tables might be listed as unpublished appendices available from the author. (NCFR, N.D.)

4. All important results should be described in clear language, and, where appropriate, illustrated graphically. The reader should not have to work to comprehend results from numbers or tables. The author should work hard, with as many revisions as necessary, to make the reader's task easier. (Hanna,1996; NCFR, N.D.)

5. Most of the technical details should be in endnotes or the appendix.

Editors as Educators

Editors should educate the reviewers by giving them examples of good & bad reviews. Give reviewers access to other reviews and any correspondence. This may assist in their personal development as a reviewer by seeing what other experts say.

One of the most difficult problems is language. Although each writer has a writing style that is unique, with electronic publishing and the internet, a journal is global in its effect. This means that many of the papers are sent from and read in countries where English is not the primary language. Difficulties in spelling, syntax, verb construction, and so forth often limit the readability of the article. In general, editors should recommend to authors whose English is their second language that they seek an opinion on their manuscript from someone who speaks English as a first language. In this situation, a reviewer has an even more difficult job. The guiding principle should be to see whether there is scientific merit in the work that may be hidden by the grammatical difficulties. Remember grammar can be improved but the science often cannot. (bmjjournals 2002)

Responsibilities And Rights Of Editors (NCFR, 2004)

The person assuming the role of editor has a number of responsibilities and rights. These rights and responsibilities should be discussed and agreed upon initially and then reviewed annually (or as needed) for accuracy and for integrity. The following section is adapted from a Council on Scientific Editors Editorial Policy Statement appearing in Science, Vol 25 (6).

Editor's Responsibilities (NCFR, 2004)

- The Editor is responsible for establishing and maintaining the highest possible standards in the contributions that fill the pages of the Journal and for maintaining the integrity of the Journal itself.

- The Editor has total responsibility, authority, and accountability for editorial content of the Journal.

- The Editor will report annually to the Board of Editors and will be involved in Board discussions and decisions involving the Journal.

- The Editor is responsible for maintaining an Editorial Procedures for use by the Board and by future Editors.

- The Editor will not publish in the Journal during her or his term of office.

- The Editor is responsible for selecting an Editorial Board of qualified scholars who represent the professional diversity of the field.

- The Editor is responsible for ensuring that submitted manuscripts receive fair reviews by qualified reviewers.

- The Editor is responsible for ensuring that decisions regarding publication are fair, unbiased, and justified.

- The Editor should not have personal financial involvement in manuscripts considered for publication. An Editor should disqualify herself or himself from any decision-making role on a manuscript addressing a subject on which she or he has a potential conflict of interest.

- The Editor may disqualify herself or himself from evaluating submissions by students or by local colleagues or friends. In these instances, the Editor may ask a guest editor to oversee the review process and to make the final decision on the manuscript.

- The Editor is responsible for ensuring that issues of the Journal are published on time and that each issue is within the page limit set by the publisher and editorial board.

- The Editor will return reviews and make decisions in an agreed period beginning from the time the manuscript is received and sent out for review until the time of publication, except when there are extenuating circumstances. This time period should be discussed and agreed upon by the publisher, editor and editorial board.

- The Editor will act proactively and contact authors when decisions about manuscripts will be delayed.

- The Editor is responsible for summarizing the status of Journal operations (e.g., the number of submitted and accepted manuscripts, average time an author has to wait for an editorial decision and average time it takes for an accepted manuscript to be published). Ordinarily, this will be done during a meeting with the Editorial Board at the annual conference.

- The Editor will inform the publisher and the Editorial Board of any political, commercial, or other incidents that could impair the scientific credibility of the publication and will take measures necessary to ensure that such incidents do not affect the decisions that she or he is called on to make.

- The Editor will warn the publisher and the Editorial Board of any adverse consequences to be expected if her or his professional judgment is overruled and will ensure that proposed alternative actions do not impair editorial integrity.

- The Editor will not disclose confidential information unless authorized by the source of that information, unless allegations of ethical misconduct require access to that confidential information for proper investigation, or unless the Editor is required by law to disclose that information.

- The Editor will refrain from using confidential information for personal gain and shall take reasonable steps to ensure that such information is not used for the advantage of other parties.

- If the Editor becomes aware of a contravention of these guidelines, she or he will report it to the publisher and the Editorial Board.

- The Editor will assist the publisher or the Editorial Board in the education and training of new Editors.

Editor's Rights (NCFR, 2004)

- The Editor must be free to authorize publication of peer reviewed and other appropriate research reports, critical analyses, theory papers, and other materials, and must be free from unilateral, biased, or otherwise arbitrary interference that may detract from the long-standing tradition of a free scientific press. The publisher or Editorial Board is usually responsible for financial and other management issues, but they must always recognize and accept the Journal's integrity and the editorial independence of the Editor.

- The Editor and the publisher or Editorial Board should enter into an agreement to ensure proper editorial freedom and responsibility. Such an agreement should identify the officers, committee, or other management group to which the Editor is primarily responsible. Furthermore, the agreement should state clearly the job description, reporting responsibilities, and performance measurements. These should include statements of scientific, editorial, and administrative expectations of all parties; terms of reference under which the Journal is published; the length of the contract; financial conditions; including operating expenses and remuneration (if any); and terms for termination by either party.

The Editorial Review Process

Upon receipt of an article submitted to a journal, it should be subject to the editorial process. Typically, there are seven steps to the editorial review process (NCFR, 2004):

1. Upon receipt of a submission, the editor notifies the author of its receipt and gives a brief overview of the review process and its length. Then, in a pre-review, the editor examines the paper to determine whether it is appropriate for the journal and should be reviewed. If not appropriate, the manuscript is rejected outright. The submissions rejected outright should be included in the number of rejected articles used to determine the acceptance rate of the journal.

2. If an article "passes" the pre-review, the editor then sends the article to a number of reviewers, typically two or three. These reviewers are usually selected from the journal's editorial board or review board. Other possible reviewers may be specialists in the subject matter represented by the article. The editor asks the reviewers to complete their review in a specified period of time, typically 2-4 weeks, and encloses the review form. The editor should ensure that the reviewers have access to the guidelines and criteria for reviews used by the journal. In addition to reviewing the submission using the process and criteria provided by the journal, reviewers often in-

clude suggestions for strengthening the manuscript. Comments to the editor are usually in the nature of the significance of the work and its potential contribution to the literature. (Faccioni N.D.)

3. The editor examines the reviews and determines the next actions to be taken with the manuscript, and notifies the author of the outcome of the review process. If revisions are necessary, the editor will invite the author(s) to revise and resubmit the manuscript, or seek additional reviews. In rare instances, the manuscript is accepted with almost no revision. Almost without exception, reviewers' comments (to the author) are forwarded to the author. If a revision is indicated, the editor provides guidelines for attending to the reviewers' suggestions and perhaps additional advice about revising the manuscript.
4. The authors decide whether and how to address the reviewers' comments and criticisms and the editor's concerns. The authors submit a revised version of the paper along with a cover letter containing specific information describing how they have answered the concerns of the reviewers and the editor.

5. The editor may send the revised paper out for review again if agreed upon in the review process. Typically, at least one of the original reviewers will be asked to reexamine the article.

6. When the reviewers have completed their work, the editor examines their comments and decides whether the paper is ready to be published, needs another round of revisions, or should be rejected. If an article which has been submitted to the journal ultimately is not published, it should be counted as a rejected article in the determination of the acceptance rate of the journal.

7. If the decision is to accept it for publication, the article is included in the final compilation by the editor which is then submitted to the publisher. The format & process of this submission needs to be agreed upon between the editor and publisher. The length of time from submission by the editor to the publisher and when the article appears in print should be agreed upon by the editor and the publisher and stipulated in the instructions to authors. The journal's editor should read the submission for clarity and correct style (in-text citations, the reference list, and tables are typical areas of concern), clarity and grammar. Finally, the article appears in the pages of the journal publication and may be posted on-line.

8. Many referees appreciate feedback on their reviews. Like many other aspects of academia and research, reviewing is a learning process. The editor may consider sending each reviewer the same package sent the author, i.e., a copy of your correspondence with the paper's author, as well as a copy of each of the paper's reviews (including his or her own, in case the referee didn't make a copy). This makes the reviewer feel more a part of the process and gives valuable feedback. In addition, many referees are building tenure and promotion files. A written acknowledgment (not email) of the referee's help looks

good in these files and is much appreciated. (Bieber, N.D.)

Bias & The Editorial Process

Buela-Casal (2004), in a comprehensive article entitled *The "Peer Review" System For Assessing Quality: Advantages And Disadvantages*, discusses editor, reviewer and journal bias. He states that "The "Peer Review" system for assessing quality would appear to have many advantages: an "impartial" review given the anonymity of the authors, a review carried out by specialists in the field, thematic coherence, since the Editor and referees also decide on the suitability of the text for that particular journal, and so on. Nevertheless, detailed analysis of the process leads us to the conclusion that it also has some disadvantages." (Buela-Casal, 2004)

"Although each journal has a defined thematic field, the Editor always has some degree of freedom for favoring the publication of manuscripts on certain themes or areas, and thus for hindering that of others. An Editor influences to some degree or other the final decision on the publication of an article. The Editor's biases are implicit in the system, though this does not mean they invalidate the system.

Such bias is achieved by various means:

a) One of these is the selection of the review committee: in some cases Editors select review committee members directly, and in others they at least have considerable influence over the committee's make-up.

b) The Editor decides to which reviewers to send the work, in the knowledge that not all of them are equally strict, so that this decision has a clear influence on the manuscript's possibilities of publication.

c) The final decision on publication of an article is taken by the Editor, who may have received different or even contradictory reviews of it, so that it falls to them to choose whether to send it to other referees or opt for some of those already received.

d) Some journals frequently have more studies with favorable reviews than they can publish. Editors decide which of these suitable works to publish, and will undoubtedly have preference for certain topics over others.

e) The "citation tornado effect", which refers to the fact that widely-cited authors have more likelihood of being published, since their articles will increase the degree to which the journal is cited. It should be borne in mind that the Editor does know the identity of the author, and this will undoubtedly influence his or her decision. For example, between a work of suitable quality by a well known author and an equally suitable one by an unknown author, Editors will surely opt for the former.

f) The tendency to publish studies that find effects or correlations and to reject those that, while methodologically correct, do not obtain positive results."

Publication Bias

Klassen, T.P. et. Al. (N.D.) also investigated bias issues and stated that publication bias toward studies that favor new therapies (substitute concepts or theories) has been known to occur for the past 40 years, yet its implications are not well studied in the professional field. The increased interest in meta-analyses has highlighted the need to identify the totality of evidence when addressing application questions. Klassen (N.D.) conducted a study to measure the percentage of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) presented at a major pediatric scientific meeting that were subsequently published as full-length articles, to investigate factors associated with publication, and to describe the variables that change from abstract to manuscript form. The conclusion as a result of the study was that "publication bias is a serious threat to assessing the effectiveness of interventions in child health, as little more than half of randomized controlled trials (RCTs). RCTs presented at a major scientific meeting are subsequently published. There is a need to institute an international registry of RCTs in children so that the totality of evidence can be accessed when assessing treatment effectiveness." (Klassen et. Al. N.D.)

Buela-Casal, (2004) stated that reviewers are not as qualified, independent and objective as it might be believed, as shown by the following:

"a) The selection of reviewers is by no means perfect. In some cases they are named directly by the Editor, and although the criterion of using specialists is adhered to, others also come into play, such as the reviewer's prestige, friendship with the Editor, and so on. In other cases, such as that of the APA journals, advertisements periodically appear requesting applications from candidates who fulfill the following conditions: having previously published in journals with review systems, being a habitual reader of five or six journals in a field, being a specialist in an area and having sufficient time to work on reviews. In this latter case, it is clearly not the best possible reviewers who are selected, but rather those who apply.

b) Reviewers are not better qualified than the authors. Indeed, in some cases the authors are better known, as they have published more work than the reviewers, so that we can at least question the reviewer's authority for judging the work of the author.

c) Reviewers are not better when they review than when they carry out research. If reviewers also perform studies, which are subsequently assessed by other "peers" and may be rejected, a contradiction arises: they are considered qualified to assess, but at the same time their work can be turned down.

d) Reviewers learn "by experience". They have had no previous instruction or training in how to review an article, so that they review manuscripts on the basis of their opinion and experience. When reviewers assess their first article, with what criteria do they do so? When and where did they learn?

e) Lack of reliability between reviewers. It is far from exceptional to find partial or total disagreement between different reviewers with regard to the same article.

f) Reviewer bias. Apart from the particular biases of each reviewer, the fact that they are specialists in the topic and conversant with the theories in a given field implies a certain bias towards accepting works in line with the current situation and rejecting innovative studies. This represents a restriction on the most creative researchers.

g) The anonymity of reviewers gives rise to deliberate, exaggerated or hostile criticisms. If reviewers are specialists in a field they will have published research in it. If a work submitted to critical review or its results are in total or partial contradiction to their work, reviewers will most likely tend to reject it, and this is made easier by the anonymity." (Buela-Casal, 2004)

Who Should Serve As Reviewers?

Buela-Casal (2004) went on to say that:

"Journal committees should be more carefully selected, as it would be advantageous to employ not only specialists in the field, but also experts in research methodology and design. Each reviewer should receive a manual with the assessment parameters and criteria and how to apply them. This would undoubtedly increase the validity of assessment and the reliability between assessors. …These committees would be made up of experts in the fields in which the journals are classified, experts in epistemology, and experts in research methodology and design. Courses could even be set up for the training of specialists in assessment of the quality of scientific publications. Assessment by these committees must be independent of the Editors of the journals and their boards, and have the authority to detect and assess bias in Editors and reviewers. This review by committees of experts would also make it easier to discover plagiarism and false reports, since the same experts would review all the journals in a particular field; such abuse could clearly not be totally eradicated, but would certainly be reduced. It would also be necessary to reconsider the issue of reviewer anonymity; although it brings certain advantages, it must be recognized that it also has important drawbacks, such as the fact that some reviewers take advantage of it to deal out harsh or exaggerated criticism. Such unnecessarily hostile criticism, as Sternberg (2002) argues, generates feelings of helplessness, especially in younger researchers, and makes no positive contribution to the process of assessment of scientific publications. Diverse studies have shown that reviews tend to be more specific and more constructive when reviewers put their signature to them. Anonymity is a "recipe" for lack of responsibility in critical reviews (Shashok, 1997). It would seem, then, that reviewer anonymity brings more disadvantages than advantages, so that in future it may be advisable to identify those who assess."

Buela-Casal (2004) also discussed the established parameters and criteria on the aspects to be assessed:

“Journals use review forms that are sent to referees together with the manuscript to be reviewed. The purpose of these forms is to establish the parameters and/or criteria to be followed in assessing the work. However, if we examine these criteria, it is clear that they do not totally ensure quality. For example, some of the most frequent are: relevance of the topic dealt with, methodological rigor, clarity of exposition, contributions of the study, correct use of language, appropriateness of the bibliography, and so on. But, with rare exceptions, there is no assessment of such important aspects as internal and external validity, utility, implementation, originality or innovation.

It is true that some of the parameters assessed in the review process, such as "relevance of the topic", "methodological rigor" or "contributions of the study", are necessarily related to the quality of the work. Even so, the problem is that they are assessed in a quite general way, and it is left to the reviewers’ discretion to apply these parameters. Thus, the point is not that they fail to assess quality; the problem resides in the way the assessment is made, which is far too general, thus bringing reviewers’ subjectivity into play.

The quality of an article should not be assessed only in relation to the impact or prestige of the journal in which it is published.”

Sternberg (2001) and Buela-Casal (2002) propose 15 reasons why it is a mistake to give more importance to "where" an article is published than to the article itself:

1. It is easier to quantify citations or to make an assessment based on the publications cited in a work than it is to read the article, but the impact of the journal is not a substitute for critical evaluation of the work.

2. The conservatism of the most prestigious journals. Normally, the most prestigious journals are more conservative, so that reviewers tend to check more strictly that the work is in line with the most conventional norms.

3. Difficulties for the publication of interdisciplinary research. Bearing in mind that the most prestigious journals tend to be established within traditionally defined fields, it is difficult to find high-prestige journals that are interdisciplinary, so studies of this type are usually "penalized", since it is also difficult for them to gain acceptance by generalist journals.

4. Difficulties for non-paradigmatic research. Studies that do not fall into the conventional research paradigms have less likelihood of being published. Reviewers tend to be conventional in their approach to assessing scientific work, therefore researchers tend to work within the conventional paradigms, and those who fail to do so generally find it difficult to publish their reports.

5. Disadvantages of publishing in books and types of publication other than journals.

6. The self-fulfilling prophecy. This refers to the fact that articles published in prestigious journals tend to be more widely cited than articles published in journals of lower prestige, so there is a tendency for the prestige of the former to be increased or maintained.

7. The "Matthew Effect". "For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that has not shall be taken away even that which he hath" (bmjjournals 2002 p. #). This is applicable to the fact that journals with high prestige tend to receive more and better articles than low-prestige journals.

8. Not all the articles published in a journal have the same "impact". An important criticism to be made of the different bibliometric indices is the attribution of the same "impact" to all the articles published in the same journal, given that the impact and prestige factors are calculated in a general way for the journal. Furthermore, it is clear that some articles receive more citations than others, and the system is so unfair that the articles which receive few citations penalize the widely-cited ones.

9. Authors' choice of the journal to which their work is sent influences the impact it will have. Let us imagine that there is an article of excellent quality, wholly acceptable for publication in a high-prestige journal, but that the authors decide to send it to a journal with medium prestige (this may occur for a variety of reasons: urgency of finding a publisher, lack of knowledge of the system, the journal's field is more appropriate, etc.), and let us suppose that it is published. So, does the fact of its being published in that journal reduce its quality?

10. The "peer review" system does not guarantee quality.

11. Not all the articles rejected by a journal are of poor quality. There are cases in which journals receive many applications, so that there may be more acceptable articles available than can be published. The Editor is thus obliged to reject good work, which ends up being published in other journals that may have lower impact. But the loss of impact is a consequence of the quantity of available work, and not the quality of this particular piece.

12. Articles published in journals with "impact" do not even have a guarantee of truth. In the history of scientific publication there have been a not inconsiderable number of false (or at least partly manipulated) reports. And this affects journals of both high and low prestige.

13. The number of citations can be manipulated in various ways. There is a host of strategies through which the number of citations of a journal can be increased (which is the same as increasing the impact or prestige factor), independently of the quality of the articles published in the journal (like what?).

14. Whether or not a journal has an impact factor and prestige factor depends not only on its receiving citations; it is also necessary for the journal's Editor and the institution backing it to apply for its inclusion in these systems of citation statistics; indeed, there are many journals that have never carried out this application process, but this obviously has no relation to quality.

15. The language in which a journal is published influences the impact factor and prestige factor, since the language affects the number of citations an article receives. Currently, the majority of researchers read and publish preferentially in English, so that journals published in English will be more widely cited than those published in other languages; and clearly nobody would argue that the language of publication influences the quality of the research. Sternberg (2001), Buela-Casal (2002)

An Example Of Components Of A Review Form

The use of a standard review form is recommended to ensure that all reviewers base their determination on similar information and criteria of review. The components of a typical review form are as follow.

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Instructions to Reviewers:

Please answer the following questions on this document. Please use our manuscript evaluation form. It makes our job much easier!

Note that your answers to questions 1 through 7 are given to the author. An * indicates that your response to this question will be forwarded to the author(s).

Please make any editorial changes that you feel are necessary in the text of the manuscript to aid in the editorial process. These may include corrections to spelling, grammatical errors, and syntax changes. Etc. (see proof readers notes in the instructions to reviewers section of this journal provided on-line).

Please add lines or attach pages of comments or instructions to authors when necessary.

MANUSCRIPT #: _____

1. The topic of this manuscript important? If not, why?*

2. Does the manuscript provide sufficient information to make an evaluation? If not, what information is needed?*

3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this manuscript?*

4. Do the authors achieve their stated contribution (see the submission form)? If not, what do they still need to do?*

5. Does this manuscript contain mistakes? If so, are they correctable? Would removing problematic sections be a solution?*

6. Is the stated contribution (assuming it was achieved) sufficient for publication? If no, why? (E.g., Is the topic interesting? Are the findings already known? Are the findings trivial?)*

7. Are revisions necessary? If so, what revisions need to be made? Please be as specific as possible.*

8. What is your recommendation?
____ Reject – a revision is unlikely to correct deficiencies in this manuscript
____ Reject but allow resubmission – allow a complete re-write and send it for review
____ Request more information – ask the authors to provide more information and answer your questions
____ Request major (risky) revisions – ask for revisions but warn the authors that revisions might be insufficient
____ Revisions – ask for specific revisions that are likely to make the manuscript publishable
____ Conditional accept – accept but request minor revisions
____ Accept "as is? Why?

9. OPTIONAL: If the authors claim to revise as you suggest, would you want to review the revision?

10. OPTIONAL: Does the manuscript's length match its contribution? If not, what should be "cut"?*

11. OPTIONAL: You may provide here any comments that you do not want the author(s) to receive.* (bear N.D.)

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Additional Sample Referee Forms

Here are some other examples of other referee forms:

HICSS'95 Minitrack on Hypermedia in Information Systems and Organizations

HICSS'96 Minitrack on Hypermedia Research

http://bear.cba.ufl.edu/centers/mks/marketing%20science/link02_Revised.pdf

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ADVICE TO A PEER REVIEWER

Introduction To The Review Process

Good peer reviewers play a crucial part in the advancement of a profession and are highly valued by journal editors, conference organizers and funding bodies. The essential goal of the peer review process is to maximize the quality of published research in a field of scholarly inquiry. A reviewer has obligations to three audiences: (a) the editor of the journal, (b) the author(s) of the paper, and (c) scholars and practitioners in the profession. (NCFR, 2004).

The editor of the journal relies on reviewers to be thorough, prompt, and fair. The editor expects to be provided with detailed but concise assessments of manuscript quality; a clear recommendation about whether the paper should be

rejected, revised, or accepted; and feedback to authors that will be helpful in crafting a revision (or submission to another journal). The editor expects reviewers to extend their expertise--not every article sent for review will be squarely within primary area of specialization of the reviewer. (NCFR, 2004)

The authors rely on reviewers to be constructive, reasoned, explicit, and ethical. A submitted manuscript is confidential: Do not discuss it; do not copy it; do not quote it. Identify both the strengths and the weaknesses of the paper. When serving as a reviewer, be aware of your biases or preferences. Do not be superficial or dismissive. Focus on those limitations that are serious threats to the internal and external validity of the study. Think of yourself as an unpaid consultant to the authors. Consider how you can help them to improve their study and write in this spirit of constructive criticism. Above all remember the golden rule of reviewing: Do unto these authors as you would have them do unto you as an author. (NCFR, 2004)

Other scholars and practitioners rely on reviewers to maximize the quality of research published in their field. Journals are perhaps the single most important vehicle for dissemination of research findings. As a reviewer, you are helping to set the standard for quality. You have the opportunity to advance the quality of research in your field, to update your awareness of current research, and to learn new knowledge and skills. Being a manuscript reviewer is one of the best and most effective ways to continue your own education as a scholar. (NCFR, 2004)

From the perspective of both the editor and author, a perfect reviewer is rapid, impartial, and constructive (McCrory, N.D.). Unless you are already on a review board, being asked to review a paper is one of the most difficult tasks to face an academician. Few if any academicians have formal training or guidance in this area, and when a paper lands on our desks with a kindly note from the editor our first response is often one of horror, something akin to a visitation of the Black Death. Questions that usually spring to mind are: why me? And why didn't they cover this in my degree coursework? Once the shock wears off, the opportunity to review manuscripts can actually be a positive process both for the authors and the reviewer. For an experienced academician, being asked to review a manuscript should be an exciting proposition. To be selected for this role through professional respect in a particular field is an intoxicating mix. Although it may be a time burden, it is also a rite of passage in academia. What then is the process of review and how can we improve our skills in this area? The following sections give guidance.

Steps In The Review Process

Once the manuscript has been assessed through the editor’s pre-review, a decision is made by the editor regarding who should be asked to serve as reviewers. Generally three reviewers are used for each paper or review for reasons that are outlined below. The reviewers are

selected from various sources: authors' suggestions, the journal's reviewer database, and searches of similar recent articles, assistant editor advice, or known experts. When the paper is sent to the reviewer, it is usually a "blind" copy with no author names/institutional information provided. This is an attempt to make the process as fair as possible. A paper should be rightly judged on its merits; not on who wrote it! There are exceptional occasions when a paper needs author identification in order to be accurately assessed. A reviewer would have to make a fairly persuasive argument for the identity of the author to be revealed. (bmjjournal, 2002)

Reviewers are then solicited by email to ascertain their availability for reviewing a particular paper. If they are available and willing, the manuscript is then sent to them either by mail or email. With manuscript tracking software, a prospective reviewer may receive the request along with the manuscript abstract to make a decision about their availability. Once the reviewers agree, the full paper is forwarded to them electronically.

It is generally the aim to turn around reviewer comments in a 2-4 week time frame. As can be readily appreciated, this is not always possible given the demands on academicians' time. This may be a particular problem in highly specialized areas of research where relatively few "experts" exist. Nevertheless, email reminders are initiated at pre-set standard times to attempt to achieve this deadline.

Once the reviewers' comments are known, the authors are notified. It is rare for a paper to be accepted without revisions. Those who publish regularly will realize that manuscript rejection is a normal part of the publishing process. Most of the papers require an extensive revision and resubmission, which requires the authors to revise the paper as suggested by the reviewers, and then the resubmitted manuscript goes back to the original reviewers for further assessment. In some cases, three or four major revisions are required to get a paper into a publishable shape. When this happens, the process may become protracted over many months. If the reviewers' suggestions are "minor"—for example, typographical errors—then the editor can notify the authors that their paper can be "accepted, pending revisions". Clearly the more timely the authors' responses to suggested revisions, the faster the publishing process.

The advent of electronic paper submission, electronic manuscript tracking and online reviews could help to minimize processing delays that occur during communication between the Journal, reviewers, and authors. If major debate occurs between the reviewers and the authors, we often use an impartial reviewer or "ombudsman" to determine the outcome of the paper. Fortunately this is rarely required, and most authors see the review as enhancing the final paper rather than a negative process. (bmjjournal, 2002)

Guidelines For Reviewing (Ncfr, 2004)

Here are nine things you should consider as you examine the manuscript and write your review:

1. Look for the "intellectual plot-line" of the article. You can do this from first skimming through the manuscript and then giving it a once-over read. As you do this, ask the five major questions that are central to the research review process:
1. What do the researchers want to find out?
2. Why is that important to investigate or understand?
3. How are the researchers investigating this?
4. Are their research methods appropriate and adequate to the task?
5. What do they claim to have found out?
6. Are the findings clearly stated?
7. How does this advance knowledge in the field?
8. How well do the researchers place their findings within the context of ongoing scholarly inquiry about this topic?

Look at the organization of the article. Can you find answers to the above questions quickly and easily? Can you trace the logic of investigation consistently from the opening paragraphs to the conclusion? Then go back to the opening paragraphs of the article. Are the research questions specifically stated? Is it clear what the authors want to find out? Do they make the case that this is an important area for research inquiry?

2. The next section is usually a review of the existing research literature on this topic. Do the authors present a convincing line of argument here--or does it appear that they are just name-dropping (citing sources that may be important, without a clear underlying logic for how they may be important)? Do the authors focus on ideas, or merely on discrete facts or findings? Have they given sufficient attention to theory--the cumulative attempts at prior explanations for the questions they are investigating? Are the research questions or hypotheses clearly derivative of the theory and the literature review? In short: How well do the authors set the stage for the research problem they are reporting?

3. The methods and procedures section is usually next; and this is where neophyte reviewers often start (unwisely) to sharpen their knives. The selection of methods by which the researchers collect data always involve compromises, and there are few studies that cannot be criticized for errors of commission or omission in terms of textbook criteria for research design and data collection procedures. You could focus on three questions here:

a. Do the authors clearly describe their research strategies? Do they present sufficient detail about the sample from which they have collected data; the operationalization of measures they have attempted to employ; and the adequacy of these measures in terms of external and internal validity? In addition, there should be no surprises here. The measures should be clearly matched to the research questions or the hypotheses.

b. Are their choices of methods adequate to find out what they want to find out in this study? Would other methods provide a substantial improvement; if so, would employing these methods be feasible or practical?

c. Do they provide some justification for the methods they have chosen? Does this appear to be adequate?

4. The section presenting research results is surely the heart of the article--though not its soul (which the reader should find in the opening paragraphs and in the discussion section). Reviewers might consider four questions here:

a. Does the results section tell a story--taking the reader from the research questions posed earlier to their answers in the data? Is the logic clear?

b. Are the tables and figures clear and succinct? Can they be "read" easily for major findings by themselves, or should there be additional information provided? Are the authors' tables consistent with the format of currently accepted norms regarding data presentation?

c. Do the authors present too many tables or figures in the form of undigested findings? Are all of them necessary in order to tell the story of this research inquiry; or can some be combined? Remember that tables and figures are very expensive (from the standpoint of the journal) and that undigested data obscure rather than advance the cumulative development of knowledge in a field.

d. Are the results presented both statistically and substantively meaningful? Have the authors stayed within the bounds of the results their data will support?

5. The discussion section is where the authors can give flight to their findings, so that they soar into the heights of cumulative knowledge development about this topic--or crash into the depths of their CV's, with few other scholars ever citing their findings. Of course few research reports will ever be cited as cornerstones to the development of knowledge about any topic; but your review should encourage authors to aspire to these heights. Consider the following as you evaluate their discussion section:

a. Do the authors present a concise and accurate summary of their major findings here? Does their interpretation fairly represent the data as presented earlier in the article?

b. Do they attempt to integrate these findings in the context of a broader scholarly debate about these issues? Specifically: Do they integrate their findings with the research literature they presented earlier in their article--do they bring the findings back to the previous literature reviewed?

c. Have they gone beyond presenting facts--data--and made an effort to present explanations--understanding? Have they responded to the conceptual or theoretical problems that were raised in

the introduction? This is how theory is developed.

6. Do the authors thoughtfully address the limitations of their study?

7. The writing style is important. Consider the three guidelines for successful communication--to be clear, concise, and correct---and whether the authors have achieved it:

a. Is the writing clear? Do the authors communicate their ideas using direct, straightforward, and unambiguous words and phrases? Have they avoided jargon (statistical or conceptual) that would interfere with the communication of their procedures or ideas?
b. Is the writing concise? Are too many words or paragraphs or sections used to present what could be communicated more simply?
c. Is the writing correct? Too may promising scientists have only a rudimentary grasp of grammar and punctuation that result in meandering commas, clauses in complex sentences that are struggling to find their verbs and adjectives or even nouns that remain quite ambiguous about their antecedents in the sentence. These are not merely technical issues of grammar to be somehow dealt with by a copy-editor down the line. Rather they involve the successful communication of a set of ideas to an audience; and this is the basis of scholarship today.

8. Your recommendation to the editor: Should this paper be (a) rejected for this journal? (b) or does it show sufficient promise for revision, in ways that you have clearly demonstrated in your review, to encourage the authors to invest weeks and months in revision for this journal?

9. Your bottom-line advice to the editor is crucial. Make a decision; state it clearly (in your confidential remarks to the editor on the page provided). Some reasons to reject a manuscript include: (a) The research questions have already been addressed in prior studies; (b) the data have been collected in such a way as to preclude useful investigation; (c) the manuscript is not ready for publication--incomplete, improper format, or error-ridden." (NCFR, 2004)

Most rejected articles do find a home in other journals. Don't tease authors with hopes for publication in this Journal if you feel it is not likely.

How is the author's writing style? Is it too "dense" to make sense? Does it keep the reader's interest? Is it too informal? Note that an informal style in itself sometimes is very effective in getting a paper's ideas across. Similarly, many authors use humor very effectively in research papers. Only if the informality or humor gets in the way, should it be discouraged. (On the other hand, there are certain fields which enforce very formal writing styles, in which an informal style is deemed inappropriate.) (Bieber, N.D.).

Whether to Have Reviewers Correct Grammar and Spelling

Proofreading includes checking for correct grammar, correct spelling and overall, that a paper "reads well." Spelling checkers may check neither grammar nor comprehension. Authors should have enough respect for the reviewers and the editors to submit a paper which has been thoroughly proofread. Authors who are not native English speakers (or whatever language the forum allows) are responsible for ensuring that their submission is of the quality a native speaker would submit, even if they must pay someone to help in the editing process.

Nevertheless, as a reviewer you will often find small spelling or grammatical mistakes the author has overlooked (e.g., a typo within a correction made after employing a spell-checker). And of course you may be able to suggest better ways to phrase certain passages in the paper. In all these cases, it is up to you to decide the extent to which you edit the paper. You may decide to correct the first couple of pages, or the first couple of cases of a recurring problem. If the paper requires major corrections and you know a later draft will be reviewed again, you may suggest the author undertakes such proofreading as part of the revision process. (Bieber N.D.)

Responsibilities And Rights Of Peer Reviewers

Reviewer Responsibilities (NCFR, 2004).

"Reviewers are obliged to treat the author and the manuscript with respect. When reviewers have a bias against the researchers or the research, they must recuse themselves. When they have a conflict of interest with the research or its sponsors, they must make it known to the editors or recuse themselves.

Reviewers should provide an honest and constructive assessment of the value of the manuscript. An appropriate assessment includes an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the study; suggestions on how to make the manuscript more complete, relevant, and readable; and specific questions for the authors to address to make any revision of the manuscript acceptable and useful to the intended audience. Whenever possible, complete citations should be provided for important work that has been omitted.

Reviewers must maintain confidentiality about the manuscripts they review. Using the data from such manuscripts before they are published is inappropriate. Sharing the data with colleagues is equally inappropriate, as is reproducing the manuscript for any purpose. If reviewers wish to use information from a manuscript that has been accepted for publication, they should ask the Editor to contact the author(s) for permission.

Reviewers must not use the peer-review process as a means to further their own research aims, specifically by requiring authors to respond to questions that are interesting to the reviewers but

that the study was not designed to answer or by suggesting that the editor reject work that contradicts or is in conflict with their own. Reviewers must also not use the peer-review process or recommend acceptance simply to further the careers of their students or colleagues.

Reviewers who receive invitations to review manuscripts with which they have a clear conflict of interest should decline the invitation and reveal the specific conflict of interest. Conflicts of interest can be defined as sets of conditions (such as academic competition or particular philosophic values and beliefs) that could result in a biased or unfair evaluation of the manuscript. The Editor may deliberately choose a reviewer with a known stance on a particular issue in order to obtain a balanced review of the manuscript. Reviewers who have any questions in this regard should consult with the Editor.

Reviewers who have reviewed a manuscript before for another journal should inform the Editor before they complete the review. The Editor can then decide whether a re-review is appropriate.

Unless appropriate, reviewers should resist the temptation to use their reviews as an opportunity to suggest that their own published work be referenced.

Reviewers who receive a request to review a manuscript and cannot do so within the specified time period should decline the request.

Board members/reviewers are expected to complete 4 to 8 reviews annually and to do so in a timely manner. Those who consistently decline to complete reviews or who do not complete them on time, unless discussed with the editor, will be asked to leave the Board.

Reviewers who agree to review a manuscript must complete their reviews within the specified time period. If it becomes impossible to complete the review on time, reviewers should so inform the editorial office and ask for guidance about whether to decline to review the manuscript or to take an additional specified period of time.

"All reviews of board members and reviewers are scored on both timeliness and quality. High quality and timely reviews are essential to the Journal's goal of publishing high quality work in a timely manner. Reviewers who complete high quality reviews in a timely manner are providing an essential service to the field and to the Journal, and they are likely to be asked to review again." (NCFR, 2004)

Reviewer Rights (NCFR, 2004)

"Reviewers can expect to be informed of the Editor's decision regarding manuscripts they reviewed for the Journal.

Reviewers can expect to receive the comments of the other reviewers for their edification.

Reviewers can expect to be thanked for the time they take to review manuscripts. A list of the members of the Editorial Board and Review Board will be published in each issue of the Journal. Ad hoc reviewers will be identified in a list of occasional reviewers published in the last issue of the publication year." (NCFR, 2004)

The Perfect Review

From the perspective of both the editor and author, a perfect review is rapid, impartial, and constructive. It should be an educative process for the author and result in an unambiguous recommendation for the editor. (bmjjournal, 2002; McCrory, N.D.)

The Reviewer as "Gatekeeper".

Some reviewers often see themselves as a "gatekeeper", trying to hold back the process by which authors seek to be published. Their comments may be based upon a self-determined level of quality for the journal. Such "hawks" often simply produce a list of negative comments. In many cases, although it provides the editor with a firm opinion, the review offers nothing to an author who may seek to improve his or her research or scientific writing. (McCrory, N.D.)

A good review is supportive, constructive, thoughtful, and fair. It identifies both strengths and weaknesses, and offers concrete suggestions for improvements. It acknowledges the reviewer's biases where appropriate, and justifies the reviewer's conclusions. (NCFR 2004) A bad review is superficial, nasty, petty, self-serving, or arrogant. It indulges the reviewer's biases with no justification. It focuses exclusively on weaknesses and offers no specific suggestions for improvement. (NCFR 2004) It is far more useful to make suggestions on how to improve the paper to enable the authors to understand the problems than to savage the paper in an uncompromising fashion. (McCrory, N.D.)

The truly obsessive reviewer not only carries out their own research or review of the literature, but also reanalyzes the authors' data and comments on the appropriateness of the conclusions drawn from this information. Unfortunately this is an extraordinarily rare and somewhat frightening phenomenon. (McCrory, N.D.)

One of the concerns in journal publishing is the fear of duplicate or redundant publications. A reviewer who is familiar with the topic under scrutiny is often familiar with similar publications that may need closer inspection. It is a good habit for a diligent reviewer to carry out a search of the topic or the authors' other publications to assist in this process. In many good reviews, the comments are not only constructive but they also point out recent research that may have been missed by the authors.

Examples Of Review Comments Of Limited Usefulness:

"I reviewed the submitted paper and started my list of deficiencies. After two

pages I began to realize that there was no part of the manuscript that meets reasonable standards in terms of science, logic and even English expression". Such a damning response leaves the author little to go on (McCrory, N.D.).

"I find the paper totally non-contributory to any aspect of educational administration and not worthy of publication". In some cases, the entire review is a single derogatory sentence. To the journal (as well as the author), such a review is not worth the paper it is written on. Generally, such reviewers should not get asked to review further manuscripts.

This problem may relate to academicians' lack of training in this area. To be asked to review a paper for the first time is a little unnerving and the role as a reviewer is often unclear. Inexperienced reviewers feel the need to be excessively critical to try to justify their selection by demonstrating their academic teeth. Nothing could be further from the truth. If a paper is worth damning, then it should be rejected. It is the manner or style in which this is done that becomes the key element. Problems can be identified along with suggestions on how these may be overcome in the future. Some of the best express the reviewer's difficulties in assessing the paper. (McCrory, N.D.).

Don't allow the best to be the enemy of the good. The study may not be perfect but it may be the best that can be achieved under the circumstances. If the data are important but the study is flawed, it may still be useful to publish the paper. The authors should be asked to acknowledge any weaknesses in their study and the journal may wish to commission a commentary using the paper to highlight problems as a lesson in research methodology. (McCrory, N.D.)

You (the reviewer) can write the editor a separate, confidential, note if you wish. Be sure to mark it "confidential" so the editor doesn't forward it by mistake. Many refereeing forms have a specific area for confidential comments for the editor. Do not feel obligated to write things to the editor that you do not share with the authors. In general authors benefit from as much as you can tell them. (Bieber, N.D.)

In one superb review, the reviewer stated that he "agonized" over the manuscript and then attempted to annotate and rewrite much of the paper in order to show the authors how he thought it should be written. Although the paper was rejected, I am confident that the authors came away from that process empowered to improve their paper in a positive light. (McCrory, N.D.).

Reviewers need to remember that the review process is part of the wider education of an author. When academicians begin a research career, scientific writing is often the most difficult skill to develop. A good research knowledgeable supervisor or mentor can assist this process, but the process of publication helps us to refine these skills further, and good quality reviews are the key. (McCrory, N.D.)

To be a good journal reviewer is an educative process in many ways similar to that of the development of an author. A widely published author generally has experience of good and bad review comments and should be able to provide a fair and appropriate manuscript review. Nevertheless, reviewers need to hone their skills and perhaps their contributions need to be formally assessed to enable them to improve their future contributions. All journals attempt to make this process as fair and impartial as possible, but the vagaries of individual reviewers often surprise even experienced editors. (McCrory, N.D.)

The perfect reviewer provides the journal with rapid review turnaround, detailed analysis, helpful comments, an assessment of the current literature in this area, and an unambiguous recommendation. For the author, the reviewer should provide a constructive analysis of the paper, with a Medline review of any recent work omitted, and clear recommendations on how the paper may be improved. Although guidelines may be suggested, finding perfect reviewers is difficult. (McCrory, N.D.)

An article or journal that fulfils the following criteria (or at least the majority of them) can be considered as a quality article or journal, though it should obviously also meet other criteria related to formal and stylistic aspects.

1. Contributes surprising results that make sense in some theoretical context.

2. Contributes results of great theoretical or practical importance.

3. The ideas discussed are novel and interesting, and can give rise to a new approach to an old problem.

4. The interpretation made of the results is unequivocal.

5. Creates a new and simpler framework for results that were previously conceived within a more complex and convoluted framework.

6. Discredits previous ideas that appeared unquestionable.

7. Presents research involving an especially ingenious or novel paradigm.

8. The study has sufficient internal validity, thanks to appropriate design and methodology.

9. The study has sufficient external validity, given that the results and/or theory presented are generalizable.

10. The report provides an adequate description of the method and procedure so that other researchers can replicate them.

11. Theoretical or practical results have a high degree of implementation.

12. The study presents theoretical or practical results that are useful to society.” (Buela-Casal, 2004)

How To Survive Your Experience As A Peer Reviewer

If you feel that you are unable to serve as a reviewer, "suggest alternative reviewers if you can. Finding the right reviewers is one of the most difficult aspects of editorial peer review, so most editors will thank you for this.

If you agree to review, let the journal know and confirm the deadline. Ask for any additional information. If you are not familiar with the journal, ask the editorial office to send you a copy, and a copy of the instructions to authors. The journal is likely to provide you with some forms to complete, and some instructions for reviewers. Read these before embarking on your review.

Having agreed to review the manuscript, do everything you can to submit your report on time. If circumstances change and you are unable to review the paper on time, let the journal know as soon as possible.

Keep it confidential. While under review, the manuscript is a confidential document. Don't discuss it with others without prior permission from the journal. After reviewing the manuscript, return it to the journal or destroy it. Don't keep copies.

Don't contact the authors except with the journal's permission. Even journals that have an open reviewing policy may prefer to keep the reviewers' identities hidden until a decision on the manuscript has been reached. Most journals like to mediate between reviewers and authors rather than have them discussing things among themselves.

Do as you would be done by. Aim to be as objective, constructive, conscientious, and systematic as possible. These attributes separate the best reviewers from the rest." (Psicothema 2003).

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