



On Rewarding Peer Reviewers

This is a collection of viewpoints of personalities from different scientific disciplines. Inviting your valuable response for this debate, and will be posted in this section automatically

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Peer reviewing of manuscripts is adopted in science publication to maintain standards, improve performance and provide credibility. Usually the anonymous peer review method is used. In this method the manuscript is reviewed by a referee known to the editor, but whose name is not revealed to the author. The reviewer does not know the author's identity and the system is intended to reduce or eliminate bias (Anonymous, 2008).

There is little recognition or reward for peer reviewing which is by and large an anonymous activity. Some journals publish a list of names of those who have reviewed the manuscripts, but there is little public recognition of the scale of effort that is involved.

Journals experience difficulty in finding competent reviewers who can provide an adequate assessment of the research work. Many publishing houses experiment with programmes to equip researchers for peer reviewing. For example, Elsevier is reportedly working with postdoctoral students on peer review. The publishing giant has developed a Reviewer Mentor Programme in which experienced editors employed at two universities mentor postdoctoral researchers who have authored papers but not yet served as peer reviewers. The mentors run training workshops for the postdocs and then the postdocs review real articles under supervision. Each postdoc is awarded marks, and upon successful completion receives a certificate (Anonymous, 2012).

Kachewar and Sankaye (2012) recently made some interesting suggestion to attract talented researchers to undertake peer review work. The authors recommend the implementation of a system called Reviewer Index, in which reviewers are rated and then inducted into Reviewer Index Directory and Global Reviewer Index Directory.

They also make the curious recommendation that the name of the reviewer should be printed in the article which was reviewed by him. This is very much against the spirit of peer reviewing.

However, Paoletti (2009) has suggested a novel way to make rewarding of reviewers easier. Electronic publishing has introduced some quality indices like impact factor and h-index. On same lines she suggests a reviewer factor (RF) which will be summation of the number of reviews in Web-of-Science or Scopus journals times the journal's impact factor in a year. One should agree with Paoletti (2009) that the proposed RF will encourage reluctant scientists to join the peer review process and contribute excellent data base to journal editors. It should be remembered that through peer reviewing a researcher is fulfilling one of the most fundamental responsibilities of scientific practice (Nicholas and Gordon, 2011).

References

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5. Paoletti E. (2009) A Reviewer Factor (RF) for finding and retaining good reviewers, Elsevier Editors' Update, Issue 28, November 2009.

[Response -2](#)

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Dear Sir

I have gone through the article which you have sent to me. The author indeed has taken pain to get deep into the issue. I feel a reviewer association and conferences can be arranged to discuss the issues of an year. I would like to suggest that quires should be send to the author separately by the reviewer and ask for the corrections.

Response -3

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Dear Madhu,

Thank you for your email and the interesting article.. Authors have given a very sensible proposal, but how much it would pick up as a practice is difficult to guess.

There are so many problems associated with peer review.

1. There are too many review requests.. I am unable to take up most of it
2. Reviews are tedious; time consuming and difficult to do and often unrecognized
3. Many of the journals are really bad. They should not be entertained.

I accept a review based on the following questions

1. Is the journal well known? Is it a prestigious journal?
2. Is the author from a reputed University? Or is the Author a high impact researcher?
3. Is the work related to my own work?
4. Is there any learning opportunity for me?
5. Is the request coming from a person I know closely?
6. Is there adequate time to review the paper?
7. Can the review be submitted online? (Some journals are very difficult to review because we have to post material after review. It costs money and involves secretarial assistance)

There is another important reason.

8. Is there anything my Senior PhD students can learn from this exercise of peer review? I don't think there is anything wrong. In fact, I think it is an excellent opportunity to train my students in the art of writing a paper, reviewing it and also to get familiar with the latest trends. Believe me, I share reviews only with my trusted senior PhD students, who will not let me down)

Now, coming to the paper you sent me

1. The reward system will not take off unless it becomes popular. The ideas may be good, but the ideas have to come from an influential editor of a top journal. Reputation is everything.
2. The idea of giving points for review should be recognized by the employer. This will take time to strike roots.

3. Offering free access to various websites might be the best incentive. But these days we do not see this being offered by many.
4. Publishing a list of referees by individual journals may not be a very good incentive. Unless the journal is a reputed one. If it is reputed, there is no problem any way in getting reviewers.

I think the best answer to the problem of peer review is

1. Quality of the journal alone can guarantee commitment from good reviewers. We must be able to say proudly: "I am a referee for Nature" etc.
2. The journal editors should be committed to search for the most appropriate referees.
3. Many journals ask authors to submit a list of potential referees. This might be a good idea