

# How to get the most out of the peer review platform

Strategies for improving author experience

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Peer review....

# The great debate

- Undisputed backbone of the academic publishing process
  - Validation of research and signal to community that their work matters
- Authors recognize this and value the feedback...
- They also have many very valid criticisms about process
  - Submission
  - Speed/balance between speed and quality of comments
  - Transparency
- Make it easy, make it fast, make me famous, make me comply

**Without authors, journals can't grow so how can we provide them a best-in-class experience?**

# Laying the foundation or building a barrier?

- What hoops do we ask authors to jump through to have work reviewed (aside from solid research)?
  - Is it within scope?
  - Ethical assurances
    - Authorship
    - Disclosures/Consent
  - Completeness of manuscript
    - Figures/tables
    - Title pages
  - Formatting
    - References
    - ...Margins?
    - Even if not strictly enforced, what's in the guidelines?
- What does the manuscript **absolutely need** at first submission to be reviewable?
  - What are you asking your reviewers to prioritize?
  - How do your editorial boards/reviewers feel on this topic?
- The more frivolous the things you return a paper for, the more likely that author is going to have a jaundiced view of the journal and - worst case - go elsewhere.

# Submission

## Before:

- **Separate title page** duplicating author information, disclosures also entered by author in ScholarOne
- **Exact** margins, font size
- Proprietary reference style
- Each figure and table to be uploaded as separate file, production-ready copy
- Editorial office **unsubmitted** for any minor infraction

## After:

- Disclosure information entered in manuscript/S1, but relying on **S1-created title pages**
- Come-as-you-are mentality for formatting within reason (noWingdings) - move to word count as limiter
- References could be formatted in any style, so long as **consistent**
- Manuscript can be one file (authors asked to affirm they can provide sufficiently high-quality files upon revision/acceptance)

## Speed vs Quality

- Authors want prompt decisions and high quality feedback
  - Worst case is a drawn-out review process with a template letter and no substantive feedback
- Bottlenecks:
  - Manuscript check-in
  - Editor assignment/triage
  - **Reviewer selection/getting reviews**
  - Decisions



## Changing a pain point to a strength

- Check-in
- Editor assignment/triage
  - EIC initial review/desk rejects is a really great service, but it can't take weeks/months
    - Moving to the next step of the process as efficiently as possible without compromising quality
  - If this is a bottleneck, is it something you can pass to an AE? A reviewer? Where will your EIC feedback be most useful?
- Getting reviewers and getting reviews
  - Pain point with 99.9% of editors I've spoken to
  - Stay tuned



Stats!

## Because we all love numbers

All Wiley titles on S1 (prior 12 months):

- Mean reviewers invited: 4.78
- Mean reviews completed: 1.97 (41.1% of those invited)
- Accepted invitations: 499,373
- Reviews completed: 466,273 (93% of those agreed)

What tools are available to editors to find reviewers and ensure a quality, time-efficient review?



Keep the reviewing trains on time

## Steam train to bullet train

- Publons
  - Editor dashboard
    - Interested reviewers
- S1 Reviewer Locator
  - In ScholarOne, pulls potential reviewers from Web of Science
  - Anecdotal feedback mostly positive, but potential reviewers will still require vetting
- Keywords
  - Does your journal ask users to provide keywords?
    - Closed list or open
  - Potential opportunity to match articles to new reviewers
- Tying up loose ends
  - How long do you give reviewers to respond?
    - Does S1 close the invitation or do they linger?
- How long do reviewers get to complete a review?
  - How much slack do you give to late reviewers?
  - How many reminders?
- Editors performing reviews?
  - Okay, but with caveats



# Supercharging the review process

## Before:

- Unanswered reviews would stay open into perpetuity (non-S1 savvy editors mistaking open for active)
- Reviewers would have 30 days to complete review
- Standard reminders up to 1 week late then no editorial office follow-up
- Average review time *~30 days*

## After:

- Reviewers get 1 week to respond to invite before S1 auto-declines (small subset do write after the fact to accept)
- Reviewers get 14 days to complete review
- Review invitation stipulates 14 day turnaround and auto-close out after 28
- Editorial office follows up with reviewers frequently and closes reviews after 28 days (assuming no plan in place)
- Average review time *~14 days*
- Little/no reviewer pushback

## Transparency

# Should we open Pandora's Box?

- Peer review is often a black box
  - Lack of communication leading to perceived unsatisfying outcomes
  - Open review? Not necessarily
  - Does your journal outline the general review process? What should authors expect?
- Proactivity is the key
  - Clear and definable goals for editor/reviewer turnaround time
    - If not met, move on
  - Engaged editorial office administration process
- Demystifying process for authors without compromising integrity of peer review process
  - Delay notifications/using all tools



# Thanks!

EIC awareness of existing peer review workflows and critical thinking about balance of author/journal needs is a huge key for the future.