How to review a paper

Comedy of the commons

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April 2013
There is randomness of the outcome [A2009]

- As an author learn to live with it
- As a reviewer help to convert it to be a deterministic outcome
Who can review?

- Technically competent people
  - If you don’t feel comfortable, refusing to review is of merit too
- It is voluntary, not mandatory
  - You can be selective on what you want to review
- Positivity impacts the outcome
  - Think how you can accept the paper, instead of ways of rejecting it – more in [G2009]
- There should not be any conflict-of-interest
What is at stake?

As a GTA
- You evaluate homework, class projects
- You provide feedback improving understanding
- Impacts a student’s grade
  - It can cost a semester for the student

As a scholar
- You review paper (conference, workshop, journal)
  - Conference and workshop reviews are generally lighter than journals
  - However, some conferences are very selective
- Impacts a student’s thesis, dissertation
  - It can cost years in one’s life

As a scholar
- You might review proposals
- Impacts finances for people
  - It can cost $$$ for others

It does not mean give up the quality or objective of review
Single-blind vs. multi-blind?

Do you prefer single blind or double blind peer review? Both are fine, but why stop at double?

A triple blind process can hide the target conference. Your paper is sent to a randomly selected venue in your field this year. This way you can't bias the program committee.

A quadruple blind process hides the time of submission. Your paper is sent to an appropriate venue at some point in time. So your paper isn't necessarily judged by your contemporaries.

A quintuple blind process hides the actual paper. You log your research findings and a machine tabulates the pieces into a paper and sends it. This way you are not biased by the human element.

You need to get a life. *sigh* .. Yeah.


More about double blind process in [S2009]
Expectations from review

- **First:** Read the CFP (Call for Papers)
  - What is the scope of the venue? Submission requirements?
- **Fairness and objectivity**
  - Don’t have bias against authors, institution, etc.
- **Clarity**
  - Be clear and complete, not a black box
- **Timeliness**
  - Manage your time, feedback after months can be meaningless
- **Confidentiality**
  - Keep the result to yourself
  - Don’t take the idea and write a paper on the topic
- **Courtesy and professionalism**
  - Constructive and firm, but not inflammatory feedback
Reading and understanding

First pass
- Read title, abstract, introduction
- Read headings
- Read conclusions
- Glance over references
- My personal preference:
  - Web search on authors, title, keywords for other references
  - Also useful for catching any plagiarism issues

Second pass
- Careful look into figures, diagrams
- Should not take more than one hour

Third pass
- Re-create the work
- Carefully read end-to-end
Evaluation

- Correctness
- Significance
- Innovation
- Interest
- Timeliness
- Succinctness
- Accessibility
- Elegance
- Readability
- Style
- Polish

And always ask when in doubt!!!
References


