How to review a paper

Comedy of the commons

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Existing review process

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

Most scientists regarded the new streamlined peer-review process as “quite an improvement.”
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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peer Review Overload</th>
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<tr>
<td>Do you prefer single blind or double blind peer review?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Both are fine.. but why stop at double?</td>
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<tr>
<td>A quadruple blind process hides the time of submission.</td>
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<tr>
<td>you paper is sent to an appropriate venue at some point in time.</td>
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<td>so your paper isn't necessarily judged by your contemporaries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A quintuple blind process hides the actual paper.</td>
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<tr>
<td>you log your research findings and a machine tabulates the pieces into a paper and sends it.</td>
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<td>this way you are not biased by the human element.</td>
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<td>You need to get a life.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>sigh</em> .. Yeah</td>
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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

**The Piled Higher & Deeper**

**Paper Review Worksheet**

Stuck reviewing papers for your advisor? Just add up the points using this helpful grade sheet to determine your recommendation. **No reading necessary!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 0</td>
<td>Recommend, but write scathing review that’ll take them months to rebuff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-120</td>
<td>Recommend, but insist your work be cited more prominently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;120</td>
<td>Recommended and deserving of an award</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

*And always ask when in doubt!!!*

References