

# FORUM

## More on Anonymous Reviews

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Reading the ongoing correspondence in *Eos*, I would propose that the difficulty lies in the dual nature of the reviewing process. The first stage asks, is the work worth publishing? The second asks, is the paper as submitted worthy of the work done? The dilemma is that the requirements for anonymity are different for the two functions.

Like most of the correspondents in *Eos*, I feel that the evaluation of the merit of the work must remain anonymous. Personally, I prefer it to be "double blind," in which the author of the paper is not revealed, although it is often not hard to guess. That way I can give the material the fairest possible treatment.

However, the detailed review of the presentation and the material could be a more two-way process, between author and reviewer, with the editor acting as judge. Here, the external reviewer can make a real contribution that should

then be acknowledged at the publication stage. In some instances, the process becomes so interactive that the reviewer becomes an additional author of the paper. The danger of this stage is, of course, that authors can become sloppy, leaving work to the external reviewer. It must remain the privilege of the reviewer to decline to work on a paper that, no matter how good the work, is just plain poorly presented.

It would be possible, but cumbersome, for this process to be carried out anonymously through the editor, with the names revealed when the review process is over. The authors should then acknowledge the contribution of the reviewers and editors. It would make much of the process more transparent, and help the development of the science, if the published document were to routinely name the reviewers.

The two phases of reviewing, the initial evaluation and the detailed discussion of content and presentation, thus have different require-

ments for anonymity, and the root of the current debate is the confusion of the two roles in the current system of single-stage reviewing. The initial evaluation is particularly important, but should not be enormously onerous, and it should remain within the current anonymity conventions. The second stage should be much more of a dialogue than a confrontation, and requires a lot of effort on behalf of both reviewer and the editor. Attributing this process to those who put in the effort would do much to make the effort visible and, in these bean-counting days, carry some element of reward for those who put in the time.

Lastly, the overall guiding principle must be that of personal integrity. The duty of all authors, editors, and reviewers is to advance their science; this requires constant vigilance, hard work, and the highest personal standards of integrity. Those who have done so in the past deserve our thanks and perhaps more credit than they have received in the past. Those who continue to do so in the future should receive more immediate personal credit, which can be given only if the cloak of anonymity is lifted.

—ADRIAN ARMSTRONG, Entec U.K., Bristol, U.K.

## A Code of Ethics for Referees?

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I have read with interest the many letters commenting on the pros and cons of anonymity for referees. While I sympathize with writers who have suffered from referees who are incompetent or uncivil, I also sympathize with those who argue that one would simply exchange one set of problems for another if

journals were to require that all referees waive anonymity.

Perhaps there is a more direct way to address the issue. It may help if guidelines for referees were to include a code of ethics. Personally, I would like to see each referee subscribe to the following:

- I will treat each article with the same care and respect that I would wish to have accorded to my own articles.
- I will withdraw from reviewing an article if I find that I do not have the necessary background and interest.

- I will identify what there is in each article that would be interesting and useful to readers, and then—if necessary—try to help the author present that material more effectively.

- If I have valid criticisms to make, I will be specific, clear, and polite.

- If I believe that some result has already been published, I will give at least one relevant citation.

*Editor's Note: see AGU's Guidelines to Publication of Geophysical Research: [www.agu.org/pubs/pubs\\_guidelines.html](http://www.agu.org/pubs/pubs_guidelines.html).*

—PETER A. STURROCK, Stanford University, Calif.

## Young Solid Earth Researchers of the World Unite!

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In early January 2004, one of us attended a workshop on "science priorities and educational opportunities that can be addressed using ocean observatories." The attendees constituted a broad group—men and women, scientists, engineers, educators, representatives from the private and public sector—but lacked diversity in at least one important aspect: age.

A well-known marine geophysicist (with a published record stretching over 30 years) came to me at the ice-breaker party and said (and I paraphrase): "I'm glad you're here: you're young, you might actually see this project flourish before you retire. There're not enough young people here." At some point or another, every young scientist may have a similar experience.

However many hours one spends in solitary confinement in the lab or behind a desk,

science is fundamentally a social activity. Community-building needs to happen early on in the career of a young researcher. Meetings like the popular AGU Fall Meeting are often too massive to get to know many new colleagues. More focused meetings like the Gordon Conferences tend to attract senior scientists first, not only in attendance, but in meeting-room dominance as well. Young oceanographers and atmospheric chemists are the lucky ones; with the Physical Oceanography Dissertation Symposium (PODS) and Atmospheric Chemistry Colloquium for Emerging Senior Scientists (ACCESS), they have a forum focused on recent Ph.D.s.

However, the Meeting of Young Researchers in the Earth Sciences initiative (MYRES) attempts to provide a similar framework in the solid Earth sections of AGU.

Here's how the recently funded proposed activity works, and how you—young solid

Earth geoscientist—can benefit from it. The MYRES "manifesto" lists its aim as "to further science by accelerating the growth of an interdisciplinary, international, open, and unbiased community of colleagues who interact regularly to informally exchange ideas, data, and tools, and formulate new collaborative research projects." A biennial conference series for junior scientists in geochemistry, geodynamics, mineral physics, seismology, and related solid Earth fields is the first step. The first MYRES conference will be held 12–15 August 2004 in La Jolla, Calif., and will focus on the topic, "Heat, Helium and Whole Mantle Convection." The meeting will be small, with fewer than 100 attendees selected on the basis of a brief statement. Almost all travel and lodging costs will be provided by the U.S. National Science Foundation.

At a MYRES meeting, young specialists will educate each other about the issues each of their disciplines can address in the format of a summer school. What you should hope to gain from this is a broader understanding,