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Editorial

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Issues of peer-review

Peer review lies at the heart of scientific publishing. Simply put, peer review is to keep papers scientifically sound. More generally, it aims to assure science will develop in the proper direction, minimizing the number of cul-de-sacs that slow down the development. These days it is difficult to imagine scholarly publishing without peer review, which is why they call it the 'golden standard'. Several decades ago, however, there was no such standard even in good journals (Shema 2014).

Recently, many journals have been showing their willingness and readiness to review and publish articles very quickly. Two or three weeks from submission to decision, isn't it a dream of any scientific author? As an author, I would most certainly be happy to see my papers accepted and published that quickly. As Editor-in-Chief of *Communications in Biometry and Crop Science* (CBCS), I would most certainly be happy to make such quick decisions on manuscripts submitted to the Journal. It's not that easy, though.

That scientific publishing is a dynamically changing realm is beyond question. Not all changes are good, though. Peer review these days suffers from reluctance of researchers to review manuscripts for scientific journals. To get a sufficient number of reviews for a manuscript, editors must send more and more review invitations. Believe it or not, sometimes even 20 invitations do not suffice to get two reviews. Peer review suffers from many other problems, but it's not my aim to go into detail here. Many such issues have been discussed elsewhere (e.g., Steinhauser et al. 2012, Tsang 2013, Shema 2014, Ferguson et al. 2014); interested readers are encouraged to refer to these sources. Here, I will focus specifically on peer review in *Communications in Biometry and Crop Science*.

Like most other journals in the fields of crop science and statistics, we experience problems with the peer review. Our requests for manuscript review are often either declined or even disregarded. Some researchers who agree to review manuscripts within a stipulated time fail to return reviews on time; still, others may not return reviews at all.

I do understand peers' unwillingness to review manuscripts. With the limited time at one's disposal for research, how many manuscripts can one review? In addition to numerous editorial positions, many established researchers daily receive several requests to review manuscripts. No wonder most of the time they choose to decline such requests. I think, the

main reason underlying the peer review crisis in scholarly publishing is not the attitude of the individual scientists who are reluctant to review. The problem lies in what makes them reluctant: the rat race, dominance of quantity over quality, and overuse of quantitative methods to evaluate performance of scientists (and of journals, too). Hundreds of years ago, it was passion that was the driving force of science. Not much is left of that now – the rat race has replaced passion, while quantity has replaced quality.

Did you notice the contradiction? Scientists want to publish their research quickly. But the very same scientists don't want to review manuscripts quickly, sometimes not at all.

Scientific journals would not exist without scientists. Thus, being aware of the needs of the researchers, and despite all the challenges, the editorial team of *Communications in Biometry and Crop Science* promises to do its level best to make the peer review not only professional but also as quick as possible. Please accept, however, that we will not shorten the review process at the cost of quality. From time to time, it might get longer than you and I would like. But we will try our utmost to make sure that CBCS's authors will receive decisions on their manuscripts within two months, if not sooner. Few manuscripts may need more than two months, though. I ask for affected authors' patience and understanding.

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