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Keeping Up with… Open Peer Review

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This edition of *Keeping Up With…* was written by Emily Ford.

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Introduction

Changes have been rapid in today's scholarly publishing communities. The advent of open access publishing, the digital humanities, and the growth of megajournal publications such as *F1000Research* and *PeerJ* are examples. Peer review systems are no exception to change. Increasingly publications are opening up their peer review processes, allowing authors and referees to know one another's identities. Peer-review processes that disclose referee and author identities are considered open peer review (OPR). [1] OPR seeks to ameliorate issues in traditional double and single-blind review processes including but not limited to: time from submission to publication, reviewer accountability, and more.

Our students and faculty may pursue authorship with or serve as referees and editorial board members for publications that use OPR. Since academic librarians frequently consult on scholarly communication issues such as author rights, open access, and on academic publishing in general, librarians should understand OPR as an evolving form of peer review in scholarly publications. Moreover, academic libraries increasingly act as publishers, hosting journals in librarianship and other academic fields. As library publishing grows, academic libraries and librarians will need to consider whether OPR is something we can support and implement.

How does it work?

There are numerous ways OPR can be implemented and it varies from publication to publication. Some common implementations at journals are to publish attributed referee reports and author responses alongside the final article; divulge author and referee identities to one another during the review process; publicly acknowledge reviewers alongside the article; or even publish attributed author and referee comments during and/or after the review process. Other implementations of OPR also exist, such as post-publication peer review that incorporates non-referee public commentary, and some implementations are opt-in, where submitting authors indicate their desire to participate in an open process.

Why adopt OPR?

There are several reasons a publication may implement OPR. Some have argued that blind or single-blind review slows down the time from submission to article publication, and OPR can ameliorate this problem. [2,3] Others assert that blind review can result in reviewer

abuse, so OPR is seen as an accountability mechanism to minimize this behavior. Moreover, many contend that "blind" review is not effective in masking author and referee identities, so blinded review is moot. While some have lauded the ability for OPR to lessen an editor's work, [4] it is not clear that this is the case. In all current OPR implementations I have observed, there remains an editorial role in publication. In other cases authors have argued that using OPR can provide a more developmental writing environment for authors, where OPR supports them to have more discourse with and among reviewers, thereby improving the final article version. It has even been argued that OPR can assist in strengthening a scholarly community by creating a robust space for dialogue amongst authors, referees, and the public on research and ideas. [5,6,7]

Whatever the goal of OPR, it is important that "The form and function of open review practices, like any peer review process, should be dictated by community goals and needs, which should in turn determine the technologies employed." [8] While each journal may have similar goals for implementing OPR, there will remain unique concerns and needs in different publishing communities.

Is OPR as effective as single or double blind reviewing?

Some studies have argued that signed reviews are of better quality, [9] and that papers reviewed with OPR are of better quality than those that are not. [10,11] However, because any OPR implementation will be responding to a particular community's needs and goals, efficacy of OPR will need to be measured and assessed by that community.

What's happening in our field?

To date, there are very few experiments and discussions regarding OPR in LIS publications. At this point, those that use OPR are independent DIY publications, including _In the Library with the Lead Pipe_, _Journal of Radical Librarianship_, and _Journal of Creative Library Practice_, which uses an opt-in version of OPR. There is, however, a continuing discussion among the _College & Research Libraries_ Editorial Board regarding OPR. [12] Additionally, ACRL's research-based monographic series, Publications in Librarianship, will soon be experimenting with OPR.

Most of the scholarly literature in our field discussing writing and publishing models engages with open access, the library as publisher, and investigates how to support academic librarians in their own writing and publishing.

Conclusion

This is a current and developing practice in scholarly publishing that librarians need to continue to explore and discuss. To that end ACRL should continue to support experiments with and conversations about OPR in its publications. As academic librarians, we observe and engage with new practices in scholarly communication, and OPR should be no exception. Whether academic librarianship embraces OPR as a model of peer review for its publications, or we simply observe experiments in other disciplines, we can position ourselves to better support our patrons and our publishing ventures by examining OPR.

Journals with OPR Processes

ADA: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology

Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics

BioMed Central

F1000Research

Frontiers

In the Library with the Lead Pipe

Journal of Creative Library Practice

Journal of Radical Librarianship

PeerJ

Further Reading

Bailey, Charles W. Jr. "Transforming Peer Review Bibliography." *Houston: Digital Scholarship*, 2014. http://digital-scholarship.org/tpr/tpr.htm.

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Ross-Hellauer, Tony. "Defining Open Peer Review: Part One - Competing Definitions," *OpenAIRE Blog,* October 30, 2016, https://blogs.openaire.eu/?p=1371.

Ross-Hellauer, Tony. "Defining Open Peer Review: Part Two - Seven Traits of OPR," *OpenAIRE Blog,* November 2, 2016, https://blogs.openaire.eu/?p=1410.

Notes

[1] Ford, Emly. "Defining and Characterizing Open Peer Review: A Review of the Literature." *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 44, no. 4 (July 1, 2013): 311–26. http://dx.doi.org/10.3138/jsp.44-4-001.

[2] Boldt, Axel. "Extending ArXiv.org to Achieve Open Peer Review and Publishing." *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 42, no. 2 (January 1, 2011): 238–42. http://dx.doi.org/10.3138/jsp.42.2.238.

[3] Pöschl, Ulrich. "Interactive Journal Concept for Improved Scientific Publishing and Quality Assurance." Article. *Learned Publishing* 17, no. 2 (April 1, 2004): 105–13. http://dx.doi.org/10.1087/095315104322958481.

[4] Maharg, Paul, and Nigel Duncan. "Black Box, Pandora's Box or Virtual Toolbox? An Experiment in a Journal's Transparent Peer Review on the Web." *International Review of Law, Computers & Technology* 21, no. 2 (July 2007): 109–28. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13600860701492104.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ford, Emily, and Carol Bean. "Open Ethos Publishing at *Code4Lib Journal* and *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*." *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, 2012. http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2012/open-ethos-publishing.

[7] Perakakis, Pandelis, Michael Taylor, Marco Mazza, and Varvara Trachana. "Natural Selection of Academic Papers." Article. *Scientometrics* 85, no. 2 (November 2010): 553–59. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11192-010-0253-1.

[8] Fitzpatrick, Kathleen, and Avi Santo. "Open Review: A Study of Contexts and Practices," (The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation White Paper, 2012), 1–54. https://mellon.org/resources/news/articles/open-review-study-contexts-and-practices.

[9] Walsh, Elizabeth, Maeve Rooney, Louis Appleby, and Greg Wilkinson. "Open Peer Review: A Randomised Controlled Trial." *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 176 (2000): 47–51. http://dx.doi.org/10.1192/bjp.176.1.47.

[10] Hu, Changping, Yaokun Zhang, and Guo Chen. "Exploring a New Model for Preprint Server: A Case Study of CSPO." CASE. *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 36, no. 3 (May 2010): 257–62. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2010.03.010.

[11] Prug, Toni. "Open-Process Academic Publishing." *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization* 10, no. 1 (February 2010): 40–63. http://www.ephemerajournal.org/contribution/open-process-academic-publishing.

[12] Walter, Scott. "Endings and Beginnings." *College & Research Libraries* 74, no. 6 (2013): 533–34. http://dx.doi.org/10.5860/0740533.