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How I Learned to Love Peer Review

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FROM THE EDITORS

How I Learned to Love Peer Review

Wendy Doucette

There are two things most academic authors dread, and with good reason: literature review and peer review. The literature review can be an adventure in itself. I freely admit that my favorite part of searching is the chase, and I always enjoy the exhilarating plunge that comes from the first deep dive into any topic. After the finding, it's back to the grunt work of carefully assessing, grouping, integrating, and ultimately weaving the previous researchers' findings into something clear and lucid enough to serve as the intentional introduction to my argument. Then comes the personal content, a rough mix of factual plodding and inspiration to state whatever case I'm trying to make. Over months, I will flesh the paper out, editing and refining it into something worthy of publication. It's submitted (oh, joy!) and everything's going well . . . pending peer review.

While any author with a work undergoing peer review aims for optimism, other emotions may range from resignation to actual dread, depending on your prior experience with peer review and/or your belief in the benevolence of the universe.

Here's how we handle reviews at the *Journal of Graduate Librarianship*. All submissions undergo several levels of review. We explain our purpose and scope on our website, along with detailed explanations of the types of articles we publish. If your submission falls within the scope of the journal and is written at a level expected of a manuscript for professional publication, it will advance.

Sharing Our Stories submissions are reviewed by me. We will go back and forth, with my sending comments and questions, and you answering them, until the piece can stand alone with all of the expected journalistic "who, what, where, when, why, how" questions answered. We're also looking for signs of life: authors referring to themselves in the first

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(not third) person with detailed reflections and genuine emotions. As stories, these should be relatable, engaging, and have a definite point.

Peer-reviewed submissions are sent to selected peer reviewers for anonymous peer review. With all identifying information redacted, our reviewers concentrate on your argument and send back discerning comments and suggestions for improvement. These reviewer notes are sent to the authors with additional direction and a cover sheet from me. Many of us have experienced the infamous “Reviewer 2,” a crotchety git who hates everything, and who will go out of their way to destroy any paper unfortunate enough to cross their desk. Here’s the thing, though: Reviewer 2 is never the only reviewer. I was deeply impressed by the crowdsourcing of peer review I witnessed firsthand this summer—and was in some instances relieved—to see reviews all aligning on the same points as unclear or incomplete. Reviewer 2 sometimes has a point; sometimes it’s a point too far, and we let our authors know which comments are optional. We put a significant amount of time into working with our authors to make their manuscripts the best they can be. We’re not tearing submissions down by asking you to clarify or insert more; we’re helping you build them up with sufficient detail so they can stand alone as the informative professional contributions to the discipline we all want them to be.

How can you help us to do that? Submit the complete version of your article from the beginning, keeping in mind that while you were there for every stage of the project, we were not. I cannot stress this enough: If you actively provide information about how long something took, how many people were involved, why the decision to do something different occurred, and so on, then we won’t have to ask. We can immediately get to the heart of what you’re saying once the context is clear. It’s a little more work up front, but you’re going to have to do it anyway, and I promise you, it will make the obligatory reviews a more pleasant experience, for you and for us.

With no further ado, I’d like to thank our full list of *JGL* peer reviewers for this and the 2023 issue:

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We sincerely appreciate the careful reading you gave all our peer-reviewed manuscripts. They were improved by your contributions.

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