

EDITORIAL

The changing face of peer review

Hans Hoppeler^{1,*} and Michaela Handel²

Thanking our peer reviewers (and reducing our carbon footprint)

With more than 1400 research papers submitted each year, the Editors of JEB are reliant on the expertise and commitment of the experimental biology community to help evaluate the quality of the research that they receive and ensure that those articles that are ultimately published are of significance and interest to the field. We would therefore like to take this opportunity to formally acknowledge the contributions of those who have reviewed for us over the past year (see supplementary information for a list of all reviewers in 2019).

In previous years, we have also thanked our reviewers personally by sending them a copy of our Highlights booklet (a compilation of some of the articles featured in Inside JEB during the year). However, although many reviewers have told us they appreciated this gesture, others expressed concern over the carbon footprint of mailing so many packages around the world. You only have to browse a recent issue of JEB to see the far-reaching effects of climate change on species and their habitats; indeed, our 2020 JEB Symposium – Predicting the Future: Species Survival in a Changing World – will focus on the significant role of experimental biologists in assessing the susceptibility or resilience of species to future, human-induced environmental change. Thus, from this year onwards, we are replacing our physical mailing with a more environmentally friendly emailed PDF file (downloadable from <https://jeb.biologists.org/content/highlights2019>) and will be re-allocating the funds we would previously have spent on distributing these booklets to carbon-offsetting the flights of all delegates to future JEB symposia and the production of the resulting special issues.

We are pleased to see how many reviewers have taken advantage of our recent integration of the Publons reviewer recognition service (<https://publons.com>) into our workflow. Reviewers can now choose to add their JEB review to their Publons profile when completing the review submission form. We are also happy to verify reviews completed prior to the integration, allowing reviewers to showcase their peer review contributions in a format that can be included in job and grant applications.

Inclusivity in peer review

We would like to make the peer review process more inclusive and are endeavouring to make our reviewer pool more representative of the diversity within our community. As such, we ensure that all our Handling Editors undertake training in ‘equality and diversity’ and ‘unconscious bias’ and we encourage authors to consider diversity in geographical location, gender, ethnicity and career stage when suggesting appropriate reviewers for their manuscript.

We very much advocate the involvement of postdocs and other early-career researchers in the peer review process as part of a mentoring role and have recently introduced a field within the review report to allow researchers to record the name of each co-reviewer so that we can credit their contribution and add them to our database of potential future reviewers.

Cross-referee commenting

In 2020, we will be further strengthening our peer review process by giving reviewers the opportunity to view and provide feedback on the other reviewer reports associated with a manuscript prior to the Editor making a decision. More details will follow when we launch this new feature, but we feel it will be particularly useful in cases where reviewer opinions are split and will assist the Editor in quickly resolving differences between reviewers and identifying unreasonable or unnecessary requests so that they are able to provide more-directed advice to authors in their decision letters.

Community consultation on transparent peer review

In an effort to increase openness and transparency, a number of journals have started to post peer review reports, together with editorial and author correspondence, alongside their published research papers. The aim of this is to take some of the mystery out of the editorial decision process, improve review practices, remove bias and ultimately boost trust in science.

In considering whether such a step is appropriate for JEB, the Editors are keen to hear the views of our authors, reviewers and readers, and we therefore invite you to participate in a short survey about transparent peer review. Please go to <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/FSKVT5G> to take part.

¹Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Experimental Biology. ²Managing Editor, Journal of Experimental Biology.

*Author for correspondence (hoppeler@ana.unibe.ch)

 H.H., 0000-0003-0417-3091