

The peer review process: perspectives and insights from a journal editor

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Ever-increasing numbers of manuscripts, grant proposals, working group documents, position papers, etc. are being circulated – to an overburdened community of non-remunerated experts – for critical evaluation. Expert reviewers are fatigued. Their efforts, and particularly the amount of time required to prepare complete, well-considered and constructive critiques, are unrecognized by administrators. As a result, the peer review process is in danger of collapse. More and more colleagues are no longer able or willing to accept review assignments. I will discuss these, and related issues, from my perspective as Associate Editor-in-Chief of Marine Ecology Progress Series (MEPS). In 2007, MEPS, L&O, CJFAS and the ICES JMS will receive > 3000 manuscripts for evaluation. At least 2000 of these will be distributed for review, and some of them will be resubmitted and reviewed again. This will require approximately 10 000 reviews. With current rates of rejection, at least 1500 of these manuscripts will likely be resubmitted to other journals, which will solicit perhaps 3000–4000 more reviews. Some of those will be rejected, and resubmitted elsewhere. Thus, manuscripts initially submitted to only 4 marine science journals could easily require more than 15 000 reviews. And how many qualified experts are there out there anyways?! These numbers, and the level of non-remunerated time and effort that they represent, are meant to be sobering and will hopefully serve as the basis for an animated discussion.

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