

EDITORIAL

Quality assessment and improvement of manuscripts

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Quality assessment and improvement of submitted manuscripts is an essential part of the scientific process¹. No branch of science and no scientific journal can survive without such controls. Free access to uncontrolled information confuses rather than assists scientists, because much more information is being produced than can possibly be digested. For progress in science we need quality controlled information that updates researchers reliably about the state of the art in their respective field of interest.

Quality assessment and improvement is complex in terms of organizational detail, and it is expensive in terms of effort and money. It is the domain of carefully selected acknowledged experts. The selection of experts and the translation of quality assessments and improvements into actions and decisions are the main responsibilities of science editors.

The largest and oldest journal of Inter-Research (IR) — 'Marine Ecology Progress Series' (MEPS) — has introduced several levels of cooperation between editors and experts. MEPS prefers to appoint newly selected experts first as *Anonymous Referee* (AR). If the cooperation turns out to be fruitful for both editor and expert, it is strengthened by an appointment to *Staff Anonymous Referee* (SAR). The third level of further developed cooperation is appointment as *Review Editor* (RE)². The name and expertise of an RE are listed in the journal; REs are granted free online access to MEPS. The most advanced level of cooperation with an expert is appointment to *Contributing Editor* (CE).

A CE receives manuscripts, has these evaluated and decides on acceptance or rejection. The CE thus broadens the input basis of the journal. Name, email and postal addresses, as well as the research fields of CEs are printed in MEPS. CEs receive complimentary MEPS copies.

All IR journals benefit from the work of specialized and highly motivated *Copy Editors* and *Typesetters*, and from the efforts of experienced *Production Editors*. These staff members strive to improve the quality of accepted manuscripts.

We frequently receive questions from authors, referees or editors concerning aspects of quality assessment and improvement. This Editorial provides some essential answers. Guidelines for IR editors, reviewers and authors are available from Inter-Research: ir@int-res.com.

LITERATURE CITED

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- Kinne O (1988) The scientific process—its links, functions and problems. *Naturwissenschaften* 74:275–279
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- Riisgård HU (2000) Theme Section: The peer-review system: time for re-assessment? *Mar Ecol Prog Ser* 192:305–313
- Riisgård HU (2003) Theme Section: Misuse of the peer review system: time for countermeasures? *Mar Ecol Prog Ser* 258: 297–309

¹The scientific process has received attention from several authors (e.g. Kinne 1988, 2003, Riisgård 2000, 2003, Browman & Kirby 2004)

²In other IR journals REs are usually nominated by Subject Editors and are formally appointed by IR