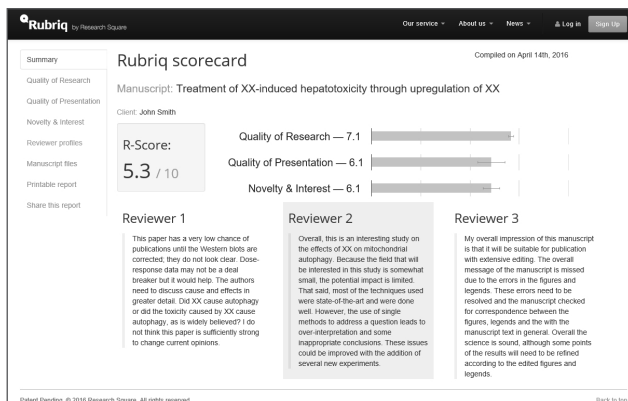


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Rubriq: rigorous, timely peer review

<https://www.rubriq.com>



Peer review is the essence of scientific publishing. It bestows credibility and confidence. Therefore, the trustworthiness of articles published in a scientific journal largely depends on the quality of its peer review process.

What are the requirements for a good peer review? Many may come to mind, but the list should always include fairness, objectivity, and thoroughness. The best way to achieve fairness and objectivity is through an independent, double-blind review. Professionalism and sound knowledge of the subject matter and of scientific methodology will guarantee a thorough review.

Unfortunately, *peer review fatigue* is making it difficult for editors to find good reviewers for their articles. And when they do, the reviews will probably take several weeks – or even months – to come in. Time, then, becomes another increasingly important variable in scientific publishing.

As the editor-in-chief of a small, local journal trying to improve its standing (nationally and internationally), I decided, backed by my institution, to make a radical change in our peer review process: we partnered with Rubriq. Why? Because Rubriq could give the journal what it needed most: reliable, rigorous and expedient peer review.

Rubriq is part of Research Square and it performs an outstanding peer review service based on the Rubriq Scorecard and a vast network of international reviewers. Each submitted paper – their website is very user friendly – is reviewed by three experts in the field and within three weeks the Rubriq Scorecard arrives. This scorecard is extremely useful; it gives both quantitative and qualitative information on the paper and it encompasses all the areas that need to be evaluated in a manuscript: quality of the research, quality of the presentation, and novelty and interest of the subject matter.

As editor-in-chief, I think that the comments the reviewers make – the qualitative information in the

Scorecard – are the most valuable tool for decision-making. They have helped me decide whether a manuscript is worth “saving” or it is fundamentally flawed. This is an especially critical decision for a small, local journal: on one hand, we “need” articles and we know that resources for research are always extremely difficult to come by; on the other hand, we do not want to (and should never) publish unreliable research. Therefore, the comments in the Scorecard become crucial: should we go the extra mile to help authors achieve a publishable manuscript? Absolutely, but *only* if the scientific methodology used was sound.

How do I handle a paper when it comes through our website? Because the peer review is international, all manuscripts must initially be in English. I review the paper in order to make sure that it is acceptably well written and contains all the information that we ask for. I then put it through the Rubriq website. The process is pretty straightforward and simple, aided by pull-down menus and cut-and-paste features. A few questions have to be answered in relation to the type of submission, the area of study and the authors. The title of the paper and the abstract are included, the keywords are typed, and finally, the manuscript is uploaded. The whole process takes 15 to 20 minutes. Once the manuscript is submitted, an email that indicates when to expect the results of the peer review is immediately sent.

Who pays for this service? In our case, my institution does. We signed a contract with Rubriq, deposited the amount agreed upon in their bank and fees are automatically withdrawn when a manuscript goes through. Why is this cost not charged to the authors? Because we are a small journal that re-invented itself and is trying to grow. We would not get any submissions if we charged a publication fee. In order to attract papers, we have to invest in quality and, in my opinion, a professional, unbiased peer review is the best way to accomplish this goal.

From my own personal perspective, Rubriq is an editor-in-chief’s dream come true: hassle-free, rigorous and always-on-time peer review. Our partnership has allowed me to focus less on management and more on content. Now, is there anybody out there who could help us manage authors?

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