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Identification of peer reviewed content, screening for predatory publishing and maintenance of publication channel lists

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CONTENT

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- II. Screening for predatory publishing
- III. Maintenance of publication channel lists



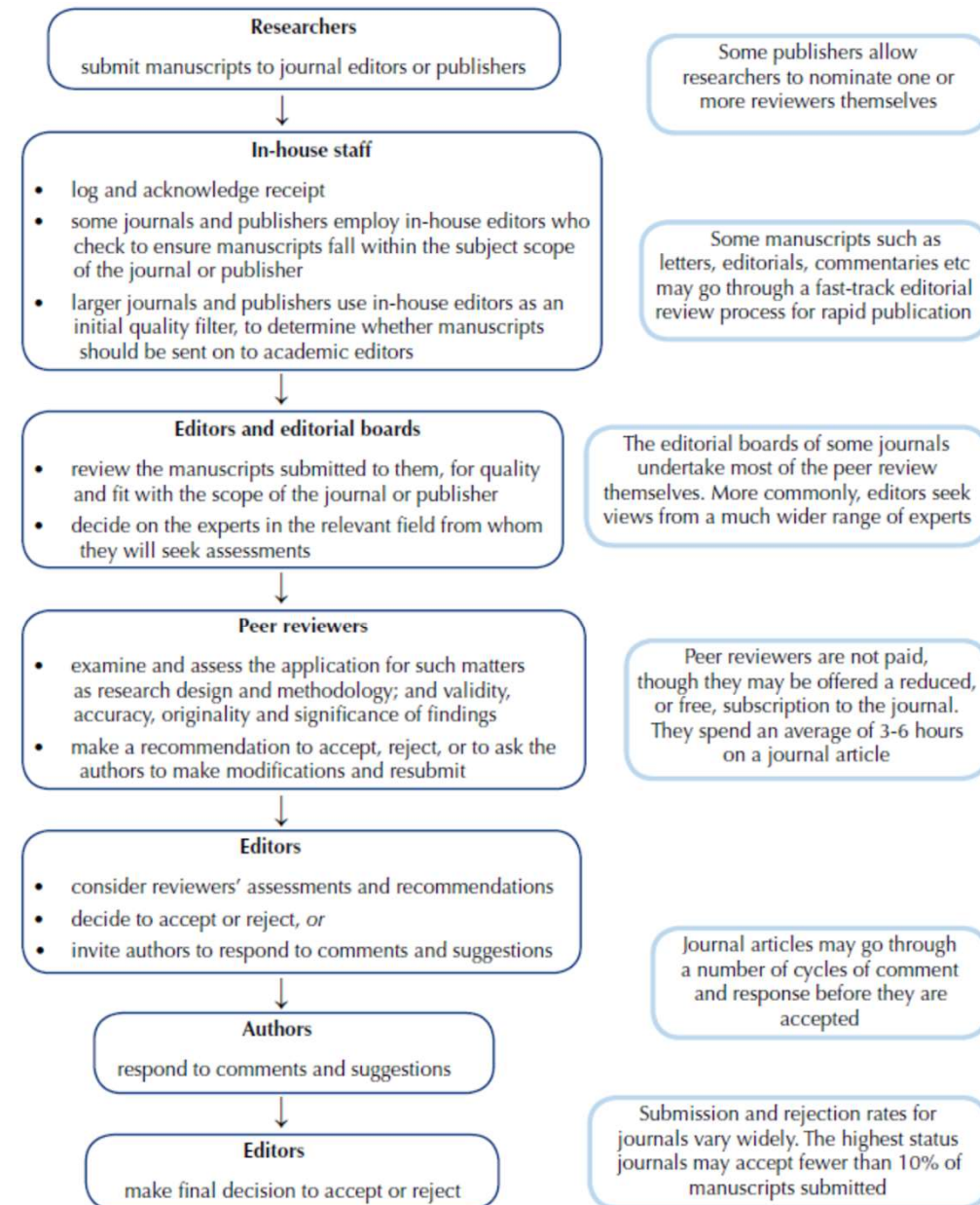


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I. Identification of peer reviewed content

WHAT IS PEER REVIEW?

- Peer review is the formal quality assurance mechanism whereby scholarly manuscripts are made subject to the scrutiny of experts, whose reports are used to improve works and make final decisions regarding publication.
- Referees' task is typically to assess:
 - Technical validity or soundness of the work in its methodology, analysis and argumentation
 - Originality, scientific importance, expected impact of the work
- Recommend:
 - Acceptance
 - Minor/major modifications
 - Rejection



Peer Review: A Guide for Researchers, Research Information Network

SHORT SURVEY

Q1: Who has ever doubted whether an article, chapter or monograph – published by someone else or even by yourself – should be classified as peer-reviewed publication or not?



IS IT – OR IS IT NOT – PEER-REVIEWED?

“There is a great mess, no one knows what is peer-reviewed and what is not... For me it's peer-reviewed when there is really a review... We have no list of peer-reviewed journals... If my researcher thinks it's a lot of work and it's scientific, I believe it”

- Informant in charge of validating the list of scholarly publications: Kaltenbrunner, W. & de Rijcke, S. (2016) 'Quantifying 'Output' for Evaluation: Administrative Knowledge Politics and Changing Epistemic Cultures in Dutch Law Faculties', *Science and Public Policy*, 44/2: 1–10.



Ambiguity in identification of peer-reviewed publications in the Finnish and Flemish performance-based research funding systems

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Abstract

In performance-based research funding systems evidence of peer review is often considered a requirement for publications to be included. Originating from the sciences, pre-publication peer review is very common in the publishing process, also in the social sciences and humanities. Sometimes, however, it is ambiguous whether a publication is peer-reviewed or not. In this contribution, we analyse the ambiguity in identifying a journal's or publication's peer-review status by comparing the classification of journals in Finland and Flanders, and by taking stock of Finnish authors' reporting of



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BACKGROUND

- Pre-publication peer review originates from the sciences (the 17th century *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*), where it has been established during the latter half of the 20th century as a precondition of contributions to scientific knowledge
- It is common also in the social sciences and humanities (SSH): “it has become generally accepted in the SSH during the last decades that publications presenting new results from research should be peer reviewed”
 - Sivertsen, G, & Larsen, B. (2012) ‘Comprehensive bibliographic coverage of the social sciences and humanities in a citation index: an empirical analysis of the potential’, *Scientometrics*, 91/2: 567–575.
- Nowadays, most expert and metrics-based evaluation and funding systems make the distinction between peer-reviewed scholarly publications and those intended for disseminating knowledge beyond academia.
- Most researchers identify peer-reviewed publications as those that have actually undergone a certain type of recognizable review process before publication, some may still consider that any substantive contribution to knowledge merits to count as “peer-reviewed” output.



SOURCES OF AMBIGUITY

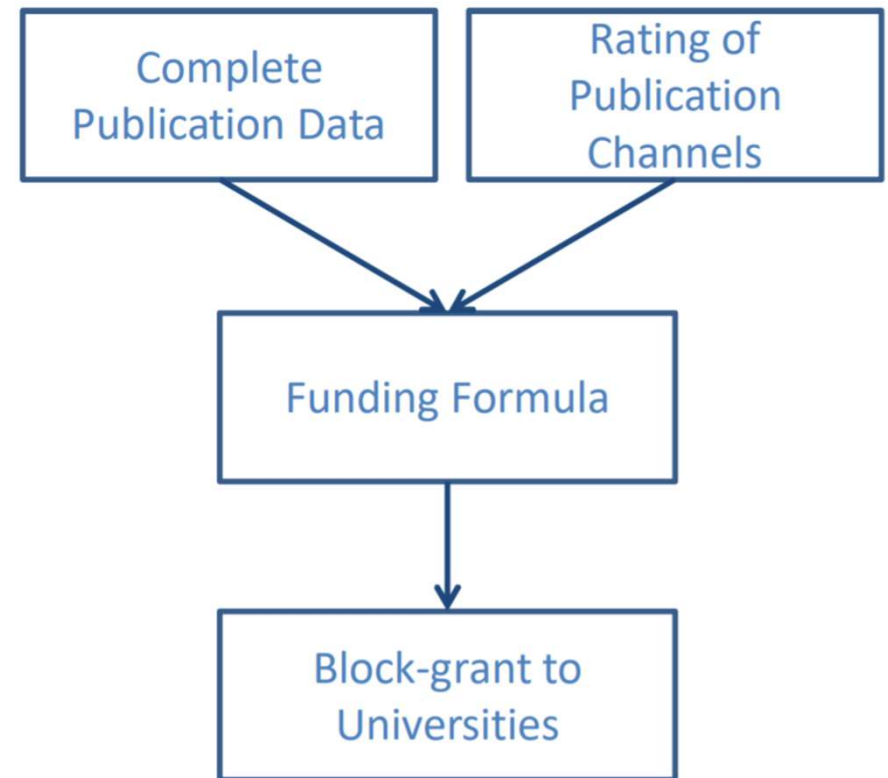
- The starting point of the identification of peer-reviewed publications usually is whether the publication channel (e.g. a journal, or a book series or a publisher) has a distinct procedure in place for applying pre-publication peer review. This is not always clear.
- Moreover, many publication channels that apply peer review also publish items that are not peer-reviewed.
 - Editorials, opinions, comments, discussions, book reviews, and abstracts, textbooks and *libri amicorum* are typical examples
- Peer review practices also differ across fields, and across journal, conference and book publishing. Differences may concern:
 - the number of referees (one or more)
 - their degree of anonymity vis-à-vis the authors (double-blind, single-blind or open identity)
 - their relation to the publication channel (editors, editorial board, reading committee, or external)



PEER REVIEW IN PRFS CONTEXT

- Several European PRFSs rely on the indexation of journals in Web of Science or Scopus as evidence of peer review.
- Other PRFSs, however, also include outputs from publication channels that are not indexed in the major international citation databases, in order to take into account book publications and journal output in a variety of languages.
- This is the case, for example, in Denmark, Finland, Flanders (Belgium) and Norway, where panels of experts in the field determine the peer review status of journals and book publishers.
- The Finnish publication data also includes researchers' self-reported peer-review status

Norwegian model



IDENTIFYING PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATION CHANNELS

- Some studies have pointed out that even experts in the field may disagree whether a given journal or book publisher applies peer review and is scholarly or not.
- Our analysis shows that 9.5 % of the 4505 SSH journals/series included in the national authority lists supporting PRFSs in Finland and Flanders have been evaluated differently by experts as being peer reviewed or not.

FIELD	JOURNALS	GREY ZONE
All SSH fields	4505	9.5 %
Social sciences	2789	7.6 %
5.1 Psychology	466	4.3 %
5.2 Economics and business	687	6.4 %
5.3 Educational sciences	276	6.9 %
5.4 Sociology	344	6.4 %
5.5 Law	279	12.5 %
5.6 Political science	220	12.7 %
5.7 Social and economic geography	197	3.6 %
5.8 Media and communications	221	9.0 %
5.9 Other social sciences	99	16.2 %
Humanities	1716	12.6 %
6.1 History and archaeology	324	14.2 %
6.2 Languages and literature	748	13.2 %
6.3 Philosophy, ethics and religion	404	6.4 %
6.4 Arts	180	19.4 %
6.5 Other humanities	60	16.7 %



CHANNEL LISTS VS SELF-REPORTS OF PEER REVIEW

- Instead of authority lists of peer reviewed journals and book publishers, PRFSs and evaluation systems may also rely on researchers' self-reports to determine the peer review status of outputs.
- Our analysis shows that 16 % of 32,427 self-reported peer-reviewed SSH outputs by Finnish researchers were published in channels that have not been approved to be peer-reviewed by the Finnish expert panels.

FIELD	OUTPUTS	GREY ZONE
All SSH	32427	16 %
Social sciences	20998	15 %
5.1 Psychology	1956	7 %
5.2 Economics and business	4896	13 %
5.3 Educational sciences	3822	20 %
5.4 Sociology	3013	16 %
5.5 Law	2218	18 %
5.6 Political science	1656	18 %
5.7 Social and economic geography	651	14 %
5.8 Media and communications	1107	12 %
5.9 Other social sciences	1679	17 %
Humanities	11948	16 %
6.1 History and archaeology	3057	16 %
6.2 Languages and literature	3872	15 %
6.3 Philosophy, ethics and religion	2654	13 %
6.4 Arts	1301	27 %
6.5 Other humanities	1064	20 %



COMPARING CO-AUTHORS' SELF-REPORTS

- Our analysis of 3596 SSH outputs published by Finnish researchers in 2011-2015 with authors from more than one Finnish university shows that in 8 % of the cases, co-authors of the same article or monograph differed in their assessment of whether it is peer-reviewed or not.
- Overall, the grey zones of peer review appear to be larger in the humanities than the social sciences, and more common among book publications than journal articles and in the national than other language publications.

FIELD	OUTPUTS	GREY ZONE
All SSH	3596	8 %
Social sciences	3436	8 %
5.1 Psychology	544	2 %
5.2 Economics and business	858	8 %
5.3 Educational sciences	676	8 %
5.4 Sociology	428	10 %
5.5 Law	157	14 %
5.6 Political science	211	13 %
5.7 Social and economic geography	89	12 %
5.8 Media and communications	174	10 %
5.9 Other social sciences	299	10 %
Humanities	949	11 %
6.1 History and archaeology	149	8 %
6.2 Languages and literature	335	10 %
6.3 Philosophy, ethics and religion	132	17 %
6.4 Arts	162	12 %
6.5 Other humanities	171	9 %



IMPLICATIONS OF AMBIGUITY

- It is important to recognize that the distinction between peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed outputs and publication channels is not always clear-cut.
- PRFSs typically define peer review technically, focusing on the existence of a recognizable pre-publication procedure. This definition may not encompass all outputs valued by the researchers themselves as original knowledge contributions.
- In a research evaluation procedure – especially at individual level – it can be of great consequence if a valued research output is not recognized because of the technical PRFS criteria.
- Publication information systems should be sufficiently inclusive, flexible and structured to include all outputs that researchers consider relevant contributions to research and dissemination, even if they may not all be taken into account in the PRFS.
- Ambiguity concerns also the self-reported publication lists. “Misrepresenting research achievements” is one of the unacceptable practices indicated in *The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity*.



LABELS FOR PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

- The Guaranteed Peer Reviewed Content or GPRC label created by the Flemish Publishers Association is a label for individual books that are published by Flemish publishers and have undergone a peer review process prior to publication.
- In Finland, the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies (TSV) grants a right to use a label for peer-reviewed scholarly publications to Finnish publishers of academic/scholarly books, book series and journals that adhere to a series of requirements, both concerning the peer review process itself and documentation related to the review process.
- It is a common practice in Central and Eastern European countries to disclose reviewers' names in published scholarly books.
 - Kulczycki, E., Rozkosz, E. A., Engels, T., Guns, R., Hołowiecki, M., & Pölönen, J. (2019) 'How to identify peer-reviewed publications: Open-identity labels in scholarly book publishing', *PloS one*, 14/3: e0214423.





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Screening for predatory publishing

Short survey

- Q1: Who has heard about predatory publishing?



Short survey

- Q2: Among those who have heard about predatory publishing, who thinks it is an important issue?



Short survey

- Q3: Who has published in a predatory journal and would like to share the experience ?



Short survey

- Q4: Do you personally know other scholars who have published in a predatory journal ?



Short survey

- Q5: What is your opinion on scholars who publish in predatory journals?
 - They are great people : if one can game the system, they are right to do so
 - I do not care that people publish in predatory journals
 - Predatory publishing has a negative impact on how research is perceived, so scholars who knowingly engage in it should be punished



Yet what to do about it ?

- Some insights from work by Joshua Eykens, Raf Guns, A.I.M. Jakaria Rahman & Tim C.E. Engels, Identifying publications in questionable journals in the context of performance-based research funding, *PlosONE*, in press.
- **RQ1:** What is the yearly number and evolution of POA journals and publications in Flemish SSH, and how does this compare to the number and evolution of legitimate gold OA journals and publications as well as to the total number of peer reviewed publications in the PRFS?
- **RQ2:** How are POA publications distributed over fields?
- **RQ3.** What are the authorship characteristics of POA publications?
 - Sub1: Single or multi-authored ?
 - Sub2: by senior or junior authors ?
 - Sub3: junior authors more likely to come first in the byline ?
 - Sub4: authors from the same field as the journal ?





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Maintenance of national publication channel lists



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THANK YOU!