

## JNA Editorial – July 2018

*Know that your review is important and that you have an opportunity to make a considerable impact.*  
*from the Unsung Heroes of Peer Review, Jay Berry, 2016<sup>1</sup>*

As I settle into the rhythm of editing the Journal, I appreciate more and more the crucial role that others play in delivering each quarterly issue of JNA - the journal management and production teams working conscientiously behind the scenes and of course the authors whose work provides the unique content that has driven JNA's success over the last three decades. There is however one aspect of the process that we sometimes forget and often underappreciate, and that is the huge contribution made by our reviewers. Their commentary, recommendations and responsiveness are fundamental to the scientific quality of JNA, and highly appreciated by authors.

While we now take the peer review process for granted, some insight into its origins can be gleaned from a recently published history of the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, which is the world's longest-running scientific journal and believed to be the first to formalize pre-publication peer review.<sup>2</sup> *Transactions* was established in 1665 and originally managed and produced by Henry Oldenburg, the first secretary of the Royal Society. Ownership of the journal transferred to the Society in the mid eighteenth century when editorial control became vested in a Committee of Papers. In these early days the Committee voted on each paper read before the society – 'in dignified silence and by secret ballot' – to determine which should be accepted for printing, rejected, or referred for expert evaluation. While this was an important development in scientific publication, the thoroughness of this early review might not stand up to modern scrutiny. The history of the *Transactions* reports that the Committee mostly based its judgements on the abstracts of papers, although they could if they desired consult the original paper in full.<sup>2</sup> I am confident that JNA reviewers can always be relied upon to consult the full manuscript before formulating their comments!

Although pre-publication peer review has been labelled a flawed process and criticised for being slow, inconsistent in detecting errors and non-evidence based,<sup>3</sup> it remains central to the governance of the majority of scientific journals, including JNA.

Despite its limitations the peer review process is highly regarded by researchers, and publication in a peer-reviewed journal remains the preferred choice of most authors for dissemination of their work.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, 90% of authors believe that peer review improves their manuscripts.

I face a daily challenge of identifying suitable individuals who are willing to accept an invitation to review a manuscript and subsequently provide a comprehensive expert commentary in a timely fashion. I am acutely aware of the burden that my requests place upon those who agree to review, and am enormously grateful to everybody who has contributed to this process. Please be assured that *your review is important and that you have an opportunity to make a considerable impact.*<sup>1</sup>

## References

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