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To: Mabel E. Echols OMB_Peer_Review/OMB/EOP
cc:
Subject: Re: Transparency for peer reviewing also in the peer reviewed journals

Dear Sirs,

The international character of modern science makes me to share some thoughts in favor of the expansion of transparency of peer reviewing also to the peer reviewed journals.

The pros and cons for the anonymous reviewing are frequently discussed in the scientific literature. A recent controversy was triggered by the senior scientist Myrl E. Beck, Jr., Professor of Geology, Emeritus, Western Washington University, Bellingham, whose paper “**Anonymous reviews: Self-serving, counterproductive, and unacceptable**” appeared in EOS Transactions, American Geophysical Union, Vol. 84, No. 26, page 249, 1 July 2003. Similar concerns were also expressed by McBirney [1].

The purpose of the peer reviewing is first to improve the quality of presentation of the reported findings and second to prevent their author(s) from disgrace due to publication of inconsistent views. In the ideal case of objective peer reviewing this is everybody wins situation. Who wants to see his/hers name as an author of an incorrect paper. Who will mind to see one’s findings presented in a better form? Anyway as seen by the discussion in EOS Forum [2-7], generated by Prof. Myrl Beck’s paper, the real situation is far from the ideal one and requires some legislative improvement. To put it simply the anonymous reviews are supposed to be impartial and objective but as shown in the discussion [2-7] they frequently appear to be improper and biased. This essentially degrades the purpose of science.

One may easily decline reviewing the paper of one’s boss or review it to express publicly their not necessary coinciding scientific ideas. No views in science have to be given a crushing prominence by anonymous and so inclined to be irresponsible reviewers. The conflicting ideas make science to work. So there is no place for anonymity in what has to be a subjected to a tolerant, not totalitarian, discussion. It is the nature of science that puts each idea on its place with time. That is why no one but **the author of the idea should take all responsibility for its presentation to the scientific community.**

The healthy science thrives in an open air, in a fresh atmosphere of free expression of reasonable assumptions and considerations. That is why the peer reviewing should be made transparent for everyone to see the views of the authors and the reviewers. No one should deny a professional scientist to publish his/hers work in an original research publishing journal. Papers are sometimes rejected by peer reviewers that in the best case show an “innocent” misunderstanding,

rather than contacting the author by e-mail or by phone and settling their differences or deciding to publish them with the arguments of the both sides.

We should take into account Galileo's famous statement that "in the questions of science the authority of a thousand is not worth the humble reasoning of a single individual" when we consider the peer reviewing in the original research publishing journals. This timeless statement requires ultimate transparency of the peer review process.

After taking some time to evaluate the pros and cons for the anonymous peer reviewing I came to the following proposal for expansion of the transparency also to the peer reviewed journals.

The author should decide whether his/hers paper will be published together with the non-anonymous reviews and his/hers reply them. The editors have to decide only whose papers will appear in full text and whose papers will be published as 50 words abstracts in the hard paper edition of their scientific journal. All submitted papers that are not withdrawn by their authors after the peer reviewing should be made available to the scientific community in the electron Internet edition of the scientific journal together with the non-anonymous reviews and the author's reply to them.

In this way the conflicting opinions will push science forward. So there will be no place for unfair judgments because they will be exposed for everyone to see. The created clear transparency of the peer review process will blow away the inconsistent arguments on which papers can be rejected. The peer reviewing is a very serious job, which do be done well requires also the participation of the author. Communication between the author and the peer reviewer is indispensable to clear out all points of the submitted paper. Then the appearance of professional critiques in science should be encouraged.

We have to use modern information technologies to make the peer review process transparent everywhere and thus to avoid wasting of time and resources.

We cannot expect a fair objectivity from anonymous and so inclined to irresponsibility persons. The advance of information technologies makes the anonymous reviews outdated because these technologies can easily deliver the views of every scientist to the scientific community. So let us do science in free and open discussions rather than creating a background for degeneracy of its goal - to serve everyone by solving environmental, health and whatever problems we encounter in our lives.

Controversial views lead to a greater progress than general agreements on unproven facts. These agreements lull the scientific quest for better solutions in a world of many uncertainties. So there should be professional critics (reviewers) in science, which role will be to kindle the controversy on the unsolved problems in the current understanding of nature.

Yours sincerely,

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