

Peer Review Week 2021: Preprints Meet Open Peer Review

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Embracing identity in Peer Review

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into stark focus is the importance of both a speedy dissemination of research (something [our participation in the C19 Rapid Review Consortium](#) has tried to tackle), and the need to be able to trust the validity of this information. Meaning researchers need to tackle both the virus and the "infodemic" of contrasting misinformation, rumour and conspiracy that has surrounded it. This week is Peer Review Week, and is a timely reminder of how crucial a role this plays in building confidence in research. We have done outreach efforts on this topic before, including a Webinar in 2017. This update has been adapted from a recent post [on the OUP blog](#), and we have also contributed a video to the [Peer Review Week youtube](#) channel.

Ein Fehler ist aufgetreten.

Sieh dir dieses Video auf www.youtube.com an oder aktiviere JavaScript, falls es in deinem Browser deaktiviert sein sollte.

We've written about [Peer Review Week before](#), and the theme this year (selected for the first time through an open global survey) has been dedicated to "Identity in Peer Review". The term identity — who or what a person is — can mean many things, but personal identity is important in building trust through increasing accountability in the research process. Additionally, knowing a reviewer's identity widens scrutiny; increases transparency, and provides context for authors to better understand why a reviewer requests specific changes.

At *GigaScience*, since our launch in 2012 we have tried to increase transparency and trust by throwing open the entire peer review process, letting people really "look under the hood". [We and others](#) have found this open process to be generally more constructive, and previous studies on open peer-review have also shown that quality and courteousness of reviews increases and that there are very few negative effects. Open peer review also opening up previously not possible opportunities in the peer reviewing of controlled access data (see our [recent example demonstrating this](#)). Open peer review is not new: the journal *Food Structure* had "Discussion With The Reviewers" in their articles [as far back as 1982](#), and the medical community in particular has [over 20 years of experience](#) in reviewing in this manner. While in the past there has been some hesitancy about sharing a reviewer's identity, opening up peer review is becoming the norm in a growing number of fields and journals, including PLOS [joining the party last year](#). Increasing transparency in the research process through identity, is an extremely timely weapon in fighting skepticism in the scientific process during these turbulent times.

Policy of Truth

Along with trust, reviewer identity is essential if — as should be the case — we've wanted want to credit and acknowledge the extremely hard efforts of our peer reviewers. Being skilled and experienced enough to judge others' work shows your standing and service in your field, and evidence of this can be useful for getting promotions, jobs, funding, and [even in immigration applications](#). As an Open Science publisher that promotes Open Access to all our textual content, in addition to just adding reviewer names to our reports, we also publish and license the reports under the same CC-BY license as the article. This serves two purposes: it [makes these more discoverable](#) via third-party platforms such as [Publons](#) (who we've been [working with since 2014](#)) and provides a citable published record of the reviewer's contribution to the field.

Get the Balance Right

Serving as reviewer is an important skill, and, while it can be a lot of effort, being asked to be a reviewer is a clear indication that you are perceived by journal editors as a peer and expert in your field. It is particularly important to early career researchers to be involved in this process, as they are not only the next generation of reviewers, but are the key drivers and people that will help broaden the diversity and experience of views in academia. Crossing disciplines and

reducing preconceptions and bias in the whole process of assessing research is essential. Thus, it is extremely important to credit and recognize students and junior researchers who often co-review papers with their supervisors and PIs. To make this possible, they need to be named and co-sign the reports. At *GigaScience* we try our best to ensure that their details are listed in the metadata of the [DOIs that we mint for every peer review](#), which will enable this credit to be carried over to their online Publons and ORCID profiles.

Let me Take You on a TRiP

Peer review, or the lack of it, for preprints, has become a big topic of discussion during the pandemic. Preprints serve as the best way to rapidly release scientific information, and, encouragingly, we have seen an explosion in the [use of bioRxiv and medRxiv](#), providing a mechanism to share crucial information relating to the COVID-19 outbreak. While this has sped up the flow of crucial information, there have been worries about the reliability of research that hasn't yet been peer-reviewed. A great boost in confidence, however has been the growth of preprint reviews where, typically, reviewers are identified. BioRxiv has taken the presence of reviews in their server to the next level with their new ["Transparent Review in Peer-review" or TRiP workflow](#) that enables journals and a growing ecosystem of peer review services (for example [Peer Community In](#), of which we have also endorsed as a ["friendly journal"](#)), to post peer reviews alongside the preprints of submitted manuscripts. Being big fans of both preprints and open peer review, and previously experimenting in similar [pilot schemes such as Preprint.Space](#), becoming part of this new effort was an easy sell for us at *GigaScience Press*. We are happy to announce that *GigaScience* and *GigaByte* have joined journals such as *eLife* and *EMBO* journal in implementing it (see the [linked papers](#) and click the TRiP reviews tab to see linked open reviews).

The growth of preprint peer reviews not only helps authors and readers, but also, with the identity of the reviewers included, it provides a wider platform for journals to find potential reviewers and editorial board members. [ASAPbio](#) has taken a proactive step in making this happen by launching a pilot Preprint Reviewer Recruitment Network (PPRN) to enable willing researchers to share preprint feedback as work samples for review by participating journals. This is an excellent way to help early career researchers break into reviewing or editing roles. Both *GigaScience* and *GigaByte* are among the initial participating journals, and we would encourage interested potential reviewers to [sign up here](#) if they are interested in joining this important effort. We are already using this network, and will be happy to be able to identify more researchers to be involved in our publishing activities

This Peer Review Week, think about boosting transparency and trust in peer review by embracing your identity and taking credit for your contributions towards assessing the quality of research. Carry out preprint reviews and help journals [participating in TRiP](#), and also [sign up for the PPRN](#) to more widely disseminate preprint feedback.

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