

I have mentioned this here and there. Now I will make a blog entry about it: it's time to make a public appeal against (anonymous) peer review practice of academic journal articles, PhD proposals, funding applications and so on. I get these requests every now and then and will now make my response public.

If you like you can copy-paste it, alter the letter, put it in a wiki somewhere so that others do not have to explain it time and again. In this way the counter arguments against can also grow and become stronger.

I am still in doubt if I should make the email public of the journal that wrote the request. In a way it doesn't matter because this case is about a principle. Let's free the world of sleazy backroom politics that no longer fit in the age of collaborative open networks.

We have to also undermine the very principle of ranking. What we need is more public debate, dissent and controversy. People who dare to say no, in public. We might need a support system for those who are fed up with the worn-out rituals. I have noticed that there is some civil courage necessary to make such steps.

I am not arguing here for more transparency. I think there are better, more decent ways to raise quality. For me there is a direct relationship between the dreadfully boring content of most academic journals (that no one reads anyway) and the secretive and nasty so-called 'peer review' process.

This is my reply:

Dear %JOURNAL_EDITOR%,

I am sorry but I do not participate in this dead ritual of anonymous 'peer review'. This dishonest procedure brings out the worst in people. By now we all know that it does not improve quality but merely (re)produces mediocre standards and language. IMHO this format is out of sync with the open access aspects of today's publishing tools and the debate-focused tools such as blogs, lists and forums, in particular when an article like this aims to contribute to the emerging research on online video. Criticism in the Internet context is a lively entity, not to be dealt with in such a grumpy backroom manner.

Yours,

Geert Lovink