

Editorial

Editorial-Transitioning Publications to Open Peer Review

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This is my first Editorial since the honour of becoming the new Editor-in-Chief for Publications. In this first note I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce the newly revised journal aims and scope, which now more clearly reflect the growing agenda for greater transparency and participation throughout scholarly communications, and to announce the introduction of optional open peer review as a new step in this direction for the journal.

I take over as Editor at an exciting time for scholarly communications, as the transition of scholarly publishing to Open Access continues to gain momentum, and the broader horizon of new Open Science practices opens up a wealth of opportunities for responsible and innovative publishing. Technological and policy changes are leading to a greater recognition of the need for standard practices for the reporting and publishing of research. The *Publications* Editorial Board believes the journal should reflect and critically engage with these developments at all levels, providing a forum for cutting-edge research, as well as acting as a venue for those innovative practices where possible. To the first point, we have recently revised the journal aims and scope:

We, the Editorial Board, are convinced that scholarly publishing, as the gateway to the academic record, should be studied and critically analysed in all of its social and technological dimensions with the same scholarly rigour expected of the research that it guides to publication. Scholarly publishing has only recently begun to exploit the full potential of digital networked technologies, which affects the wider process of research communication, including public access to and engagement with research. Powerful trends towards responsible research and innovation, the globalisation of research, the emergence and inclusion of new or previously excluded stakeholders, and the advent of open science are reshaping the scope and nature of scholarly publishing. The social, legal and ethical dimensions of publications continue to co-evolve with these changes. Publications aims to provide an interdisciplinary forum for scholars, publishing professionals, librarians and others to communicate original empirical and theoretical research on these and related topics to address current issues and inform best practice.

Our scope has also been revised to reflect these aims: we now encourage submissions on all elements of the theory and practice of scholarly communication, whether taking a technological, social, economic, ethical or legal perspective. We are also keen to explore emergent trends in scholarly publishing, including Open Access/Open Science, digitisation, publication of non-traditional research outputs, innovative methods of review and evaluation, issues related to language, and the changing roles of stakeholder groups. The full aims and scope are available online: <http://www.mdpi.com/journal/publications/about>.

To demonstrate our commitment to transparency, from June 2018 *Publications* will offer optional open peer review to all authors. We will initially follow our publisher MDPI's standard workflow for Open Peer Review which incorporates optional open reports and identities. This is an innovative model in which reviewers and authors remain in control of their decisions. Authors are given the option for all review reports and editorial decisions to be published alongside their manuscript.

In addition, reviewers can sign their review, i.e., identify themselves in the published review reports. Authors can alter their choice for open review at any time before publication. We will encourage authors to take advantage of this new option in order to demonstrate the rigor of our editorial and peer review processes. Referees names will be revealed only if the referees agree to do so, and after a paper has been accepted for publication.

This open peer review workflow is only one of a great number of possible ways to bring greater transparency and participation to peer review [1]. We will closely monitor its uptake and success to decide how it may be further improved in future. The discussion around Open Peer Review is moving very quickly, and we are committed to keeping an open mind and taking an evidence-based approach. In the spirit of Open Science, we are open to any ideas for improvement our readers may have (please do reach out to me with any such ideas).

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

1. Ross-Hellauer, T. What is open peer review? A systematic review [version 2; referees: 4 approved]. *F1000Research* **2017**, *6*, 588. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]



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