Testing the System: A Brief History

Ethics and Trust in Journal Publishing: How sound is the system?
The Sokal Hoax
The Sham That Shook the Academy

Edited by the editors of Lingua Franca
Transgressing the Boundaries: 
Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics 
of Quantum Gravity

Alan D. Sokal
Department of Physics
New York University
4 Washington Place
New York, NY 10003 USA
"So, to test the prevailing intellectual standards, I decided to try a modest (though admittedly uncontrolled) experiment: Would a leading North American journal of cultural studies [...] publish an article liberally salted with nonsense if (a) it sounded good and (b) it flattered the editors' ideological preconceptions?

The answer, unfortunately, is yes."

“Would a publisher accept a completely nonsensical manuscript if the authors were willing to pay Open Access publication charges?” The answer, unfortunately, is yes.

Davis, P. M. “Open Access Publisher Accepts Nonsense Manuscript for Dollars” The Scholarly Kitchen. 10 June 2009 http://wp.me/pcvbl-194
Deconstructing Access Points

David Phillips and Andrew Kent

References


Phre-nol'ogy (nôl'-jî), n. [Gr. φρεν, φρενός + -logy.] 1. Science of the special functions of the several parts of the brain, or of the supposed connection between the faculties of the mind and organs in the brain. 2. Physiological hypothesis that mental faculties, and traits of character, are shown on the surface of the head or skull; craniology. — Phre-nol'o-gist, n. — Phren'o-log'ic (frên'-ô-lôj'-ɪk), Phren'o-log'ic-al, a.
Get me off Your Fucking Mailing List

David Mazières and Eddie Kohler
New York University
University of California, Los Angeles
http://www.mailavenger.org/

Abstract

Get me off your fucking mailing list. Get me off your fucking mailing list. Get me off your fucking mailing list. Get me off your fucking mailing list. Get me off your fucking mailing list. Get me off your fucking mailing list. Get me off your fucking mailing list. Get me off your fucking mailing list. Get me off your fucking mailing list. Get me off your fucking mailing list. Get me off your fucking mailing list. Get me off your fucking mailing list.
Figure 1: Get me off your fucking mailing list.
Peer Review Practices of Psychological Journals: The Fate of Published Articles, Submitted Again

Douglas P. Peters and Stephen J. Ceci

A growing interest in and concern about the adequacy and fairness of modern peer review practices in publication and funding are apparent across a wide range of scientific disciplines. Although questions about reliability, accountability, reviewer bias, and competence have been raised, there has been very little direct research on these variables.

The present investigation was an attempt to study the peer review process directly in an examination of mogelijk bias in the publication of research.
Confirmational Response Bias Among Social Work Journals

William M. Epstein
Chinese University of Hong Kong

Science, Technology, & Human Values (1990) 15: 9-38
Method

The present study directly measures response bias among social work journals. A positive stimulus and its negative mirror image, both modeled after a well-cited scientific paper published in 1969, were submitted to randomly assigned groups of social work journals and two comparison groups of journals drawn from associated disciplines.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stimulus</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant</td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not relevant</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allied Disciplines</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision</td>
<td>Positive version</td>
<td></td>
<td>Negative version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept for publication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As is or minor revisions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate or extensive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible acceptance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reject for publication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Relevant</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantive reasons</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reasons provided</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Reviewed</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reaction from the scientific community
Framing the story

• Hoax or prank?
• Experiment or test?
• Parody or satire?
• Deception or fraud?
Uncertainty strengthens known brands

“Stick with the established publishers such as Science, Nature, and Cell, even though their costs are high.”

“The organization of science consists of an exchange of social recognition for information.”

Publication builds status

“A scientist adds his list of publications to his curriculum vitae rather as a headhunter dangles scalps round his waist.”

Reputation is slow to build, quick to destroy

Despite the sense of moral outrage stirred by cases of scientific fraud, there are few tools to punish its authors besides firing them, denying them access to future funding, or, in certain cases, asking them to pay back the funds they have misused. Most of these actions are, in effect forms of exile or ostracism from the scientific community, but carry few or no tangible legal consequences.”

Recommendations to Publishers

- Work within the reputation economy
- Work with communities where reputation matters (societies, associations) and the institutions that have authority over authors (universities, funders)
- Work with journalists
- Work against perverse incentives (cash bonuses for publication, paying editors per accepted manuscript, British RAE/REF funding system)