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Editor's Corner

A letter from the frustrated author of a journal paper

Editor's Note: It seems appropriate, in this issue of JSS containing the findings of our annual Top Scholars/Institutions study, to pay tribute to the persistent authors who make a journal like this, and a study like that, possible. In their honor, we dedicate the following humorous, anonymously-authored, letter!

Dear Sir, Madame, or Other:

Enclosed is our latest version of Ms. #1996-02-22-RRRRR, that is the re-re-re-revised revision of our paper. Choke on it. We have again rewritten the entire manuscript from start to finish. We even changed the g-d-running head! Hopefully, we have suffered enough now to satisfy even you and the bloodthirsty reviewers.

I shall skip the usual point-by-point description of every single change we made in response to the critiques. After all, it is fairly clear that your anonymous reviewers are less interested in the details of scientific procedure than in working out their personality problems and sexual frustrations by seeking some kind of demented glee in the sadistic and arbitrary exercise of tyrannical power over hapless authors like ourselves who happen to fall into their clutches. We do understand that, in view of the misanthropic psychopaths you have on your editorial board, you need to keep sending them papers, for if they were not reviewing manuscripts they would probably be out mugging little old ladies or clubbing baby seals to death. Still, from this batch of reviewers, C was clearly the most hostile, and we request that you not ask him to review this revision. Indeed, we have mailed letter bombs to four or five people we suspected of being reviewer C, so if you send the manuscript back to them, the review process could be unduly delayed.

Some of the reviewers' comments we could not do anything about. For example, if (as C suggested) several of my recent ancestors were indeed drawn from other species, it is too late to change that. Other suggestions were implemented, however, and the paper has been improved and benefited. Plus, you suggested that we shorten the manuscript by five pages, and we were able to accomplish this very effectively by altering the margins and printing the paper in a different font with a smaller typeface. We agree with you that the paper is much better this way.

One perplexing problem was dealing with suggestions 13–28 by reviewer B. As you may recall (that is, if you even bother reading the reviews before sending your decision letter), that reviewer listed 16 works that he/she felt we should cite in this paper. These were on a variety of different topics, none of which had any relevance to our work that we could see. Indeed, one was an essay on the Spanish–American war from a high school literary magazine. The only common thread was that all 16 were by the same author, presumably someone whom reviewer B greatly admires and feels should be more widely cited. To handle this, we have modified the Introduction and added, after the review of the relevant literature, a subsection entitled “Review of Irrelevant Literature” that discusses these articles and also duly addresses some of the more asinine suggestions from other reviewers.

We hope you will be pleased with this revision and will finally recognize how urgently deserving of publication this work is. If not, then you are an unscrupulous, depraved monster with no shred of human decency. You ought to be in a cage. May whatever heritage you come from be the butt of the next round of ethnic jokes. If you do accept it, however, we wish to thank you for your patience and wisdom throughout this process, and to express our appreciation for your scholarly insights. To repay you, we would be happy to review some manuscripts for you; please send us the next manuscript that any of these reviewers submits to this journal.

Assuming you accept this paper, we would also like to add a footnote acknowledging your help with this manuscript and to point out that we liked the paper much better the way we originally submitted it, but you held the editorial shotgun to our heads and forced us to chop, reshuffle, hedge, expand, shorten, and in general convert a meaty paper into stir-fried vegetables. We could not – or would not – have done it without your input.

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