

Editorial

An Editor's Thanks for Reviewer Excellence

The concept of peer review of manuscripts goes back to the founding of the first technical journal, the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, in London in 1665. This journal published papers shared at meetings and served as a permanent record of those contributions to knowledge. Peer review in those days was essentially the acceptance of a person's credentials for election to the Society. Since that time, and especially during the past 50 to 75 years, peer review has evolved into the process of double-anonymous vetting of manuscripts by expert reviewers that we take for granted today for the vast majority of technical and professional journals.

In our own time, our own discipline, and our own journal, we rely on rigorous peer review to ensure that only the highest quality content in the field of professional communication appears in these pages. This process of peer review relies on the knowledge and the good graces of reviewers who undertake this important and time-consuming task with only the thanks of the editor and the TRANSACTIONS' readers as payment.

During 2019, 72 individuals—including associate editors, members of the editorial board, and other volunteers—have agreed to evaluate manuscripts submitted to the IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION. I want to acknowledge their vital service here.

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As I noted, peer reviewers perform this duty without pay to advance the profession and enlarge the body of knowledge that both practitioners and academics rely on in their own work. Every time that I receive a manuscript that falls within the journal's scope, I contact two potential reviewers. One reviewer is an academic, and one is a practitioner or a second academic with extensive industry experience. Both have expertise on the manuscript's topic. I request that each of them conduct an independent review of the manuscript in question within three to four weeks. When they agree to be reviewers, I send them each an anonymized copy of the manuscript to maintain the double-anonymous nature of the review. The reviewers do not know the identity of the author(s), and the author(s) do not know the identity of the reviewers. Incidentally, the reviewers do not know one another's identity either.

Reviewers complete an elaborate rubric that asks them to note strengths and weaknesses of all parts

of the manuscript, and to make a summary recommendation to me as the Editor-in-Chief: accept, accept with minor revisions, request the author to revise and resubmit, or reject. Probably 90% or more of the time, the reviewers' recommendation is "revise and resubmit." This recommendation and my comments, along with anonymized copies of the rubrics, are sent to the authors, who usually eventually submit a revised manuscript. At that point, the peer-review process is repeated with the same review team. Often, authors submit three and sometimes even four drafts of a manuscript before it is accepted for publication.

I think that this recursive peer-review process is responsible for the very high quality of the articles that we publish, and authors regularly recognize the feedback that they have received from reviewers in the Acknowledgments sections of their articles. I salute the invaluable contributions made by our peer reviewers. Our TRANSACTIONS and our profession are enriched by their contribution.

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George F. Hayhoe (Life Fellow, IEEE) received the Ph.D. degree in English from the University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, USA, in 1979. He is currently a Professor Emeritus with the Department of Technical Communication, Mercer University School of Engineering, Fletcher, NC, USA.