

## “That’s It? That’s Peer Review?”

One of my favorite Sidney Harris cartoons shows two scientists looking at a set of equations on a blackboard. One scientist draws an X through the equations, and the other asks, “That’s it? That’s peer review?”

Clearly, there’s much more to peer review. And in recent years such review has received much scholarly attention. I am pleased to include in this issue of *Science Editor* three pieces presenting highlights of recent work on the subject.

First, we are fortunate to be publishing a report on the Fourth International Congress on Peer Review in Biomedical Publication, held 14-16 September 2001 in Barcelona. Shortly before the congress, I learned that because of the September 11 events the CSE member planning to cover the congress for us would be unable to attend. John Overbeke, who had recently joined the *Science*

*Editor* editorial board and was participating in the congress, kindly enlisted a new reporter for me. My thanks to John and especially to Carola Kaandorp, who covered the congress on short notice.

Second, this issue includes a piece about the report “Review Criteria for Research Manuscripts”, which appeared last September in *Academic Medicine*. Although intended mainly to guide peer reviewers, this report contains much that can aid editors—for example, sections on the selection of reviewers and the design of review forms. I am grateful to *Academic Medicine* for allowing *Science Editor* to reprint the “Checklist of

Review Criteria” appearing in the report. Editors in many fields of science may find the checklist or adaptations thereof helpful in instructing peer reviewers.

And third, the issue contains a report on CSE’s second regional convocation of journal editors. One of the major subjects addressed at the convocation, and thus in the report, was peer review, and the resource list at the end of the report includes publications dealing extensively with it.

While on the subject of peer review: What sort of review does material submitted to *Science Editor* receive? Reports of original research for potential publication in the Articles section routinely go to at least two peer reviewers. For many feature articles and columns, both unsolicited and invited, I am the main peer providing review. Editorial Board members and others, however,



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sometimes assist me in evaluating such submissions and identifying ways to strengthen them. During the publication process, all items encounter the sharp minds and eyes of our manuscript editor, our publication manager, and our quality-control ace. As editors checking material on editing, these staff members supply an additional level of constructive review by peers.

The final stage of review by peers comes once *Science Editor* reaches you. Of course, I enjoy the kind words you share. But more important, the publication benefits from suggestions you provide for improvement. Please continue sending me your review of our journal, for in the long run, good peer review is a matter of building up, not crossing out.

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