Editorial

ScienceOpen, which promotes Pluto journals and offers them peer review facilities (among much else), has just requested that *Prometheus* change its submission system from single-blind peer review to double-blind peer review. This would mean that neither referees nor authors would know the identity of the other. On the face of it, this increased anonymity makes the peer review process fairer and more efficient. The single-blind system long used by *Prometheus* allows the referee to remain anonymous while knowing the identity of the author. *Prometheus* is a niche journal and a referee with no idea who had written the paper she was reading (or could not ask Google) was probably insufficiently familiar with the subject to write a decent report. Double-blind peer review seemed only to mask this reality. While double-blind peer review is fashionable in the social sciences and humanities, the sciences generally lean towards single-blind peer review, presumably because they, like *Prometheus*, value expertise above anonymity.

So, why the request to convert to double-blind review? Academic journals everywhere struggle to find any referees at all these days. Time was when academics acknowledged their responsibility to contribute to the common good by refereeing whenever editors came a-knocking. But times change and refereeing is almost a sackable offence in some universities. Academics now write for their own benefit rather than any common good and consider peer review a waste of time that could be profitably spent reaping the personal rewards that publishing offers. A decade ago, editors estimated they would have to ask perhaps ten people before finding one willing to referee. Current estimates are more like one referee from 20 invitations.

This reluctance has implications, not least the increased involvement of academic publishers in finding referees, and the greater use of desk review to identify those papers least likely to pass the muster of referees. Editorial staff, generally non-experts, rely on whether the author is known, has published with the journal previously, and comes from a decent kennel. As those who run predatory journals know full well, institutional association is vital to being taken seriously. Top journals have long made much of the tiny proportion of submitted papers which survives the journal's peer review to see the light of publication. A 95% rejection rate is still touted as evidence of their quality, but something like 60% of submissions to top journals fall at the desk rejection stage. The fate of the remainder is increasingly decided by editorial boards rather than external referees and very few submissions, perhaps 15%, are ever peer reviewed. So, while only 5% of submissions may be published, 85% are rejected on grounds that have little to do with contribution to knowledge.

Given that traditional peer review has so little impact on publication and has become so difficult to arrange, it is a wonder that academic journals still bother with it. The explanation is probably that peer review is still accepted as underwriting the quality of the paper and – much more important – the product of the academic publishing industry. This now extends well beyond the five behemoths that rule the academic publishing industry proper to include lesser publishers, predatory publishers and the flocks of organizations that collect and analyse the data of academic publishing. ScienceOpen is one of the last. No one thinks that traditional peer review is perfect and experiments galore are conducted on how it might be improved. None has brought major change, largely because there is no real demand for major change. It hardly matters whether traditional peer review works, its very existence provides academic publishing with certification. As predatory publishers have found, it makes no difference whether there are actual referees, and certainly not whether the system is single-blind or double-blind.

To the content of our last issue for 2022. Johan Söderberg, from the University of Göteborg, notes a renaissance in the use of psychedelic substances, or rather in the data that users of psychedelic substances generate. With the legal use of these substances in prospect, users have shown new interest in them. So has the pharmaceutical industry, though its interest is in what users of these

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drugs know about using them, as much as in the drugs themselves. In the hands of drug companies, data garnered from users are readily protected by patents. This is certainly user innovation of a sort, but not the sort that has hitherto made much impression on the innovation literature.

Babajide Oyewo, Syed Tanvir Hussain and Chipo Simbi look at the challenges of implementing management accounting innovations, paying particular attention to strategic management accounting (SMA) in Nigeria. From their own survey data they conclude that there are multiple challenges to implementation, all bound together by lack of top management support and low general awareness. SMA implementation is often seen as unnecessary because strategy issues are already integrated in other functions within the organization. High implementation costs and problems relating to information flow between departments within the organization help confirm this opinion. Ignorance, then, is at the heart of reluctance to embrace SMA in Nigeria. Knowledge is required to provide a robust response to the challenges of implementing management accounting innovations in general and in the developing world as a whole.

The issue concludes with our customary book reviews, this collection containing a review by the general editor himself. He cares little for the book its publisher asked him to review. The other reviewers, and especially Kevin Scally in his review essay on Stuart Richie's *Science Fictions*, are much more impressed by what they have been asked to read.

Stuart Macdonald
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