

Journal of Theoretics Vol.3-6

Dec 2001/Jan 2002 Editorial

An Evaluation of the Journal of Theoretics (so far)

by James P. Siepmann, Editor-in-Chief

Now 2 ½ years after our inaugural issue of the Journal of Theoretics, let's take a moment to review whether or not the Journal of Theoretics' mission is being met.

Our Mission Statement

The Journal of Theoretics' mission is to advance scientific inquiry and knowledge by publishing credible peer-reviewed articles in the field of Theoretics, free of charge and accessible to all. The subject matter may be from any area of study, and may be quite narrow in focus or so broad as to encompass all areas of scientific endeavor. The better the theory development, the better the science will be. By stimulating theoretical research with the appropriate use of logic and language, experimental research will be improved and once again have direction.

“...to advance scientific inquiry and knowledge...”

Circulation: Our viewership is greater than that of most science journals and it is increasing. From the 21,685 readers that we had in 1999, to over 33,000 so far this year. These are not random transients on the internet but rather people who have a significant interest in science. For having done only the one press release when we started out in 1999, and no advertising, that's pretty good. It is also obvious from the continued and increasing numbers of readers, that we have a regular and increasing readership rather than novelty/transient viewers (as we would have seen a marked drop in the numbers after our first couple of issues).

“...accessible to all...”

Breadth of the Journal: We have been written about, discussed, and referenced in over 7 languages (Russian, German, Chinese, French, Spanish, Czech, Russian, and more). We are read in countries as north as Iceland and Canada to as south as Argentina, and transcended many borders from East to West. We are linked by over 100 different sources and referenced by dozens in papers and articles.

We have received some excellent articles that were plagued with language problems while the core of the article was intriguing and worthy of publication. As the Editor-in-Chief, I wanted our publication to have a worldwide audience (“...accessible to all...”, so we put in long hours reworking these articles with the author. Such articles take several times the normal editing time but I think that it is definitely worth it, and the authors and our readers seem to agree.

Most, if not all, English language journals would have rejected these papers out of hand just because of the language problem without even looking into the article's substance. That is the arrogance we English speaking people often have, but to reject an excellent article because the author was not adept at English is like rejecting an article merely because the author was not from a prestigious enough institution. We abhor such arrogance and wanted to do all that we could to further quality scientific inquiry based upon the article and not its author. We want to advance scientific inquiry, not improve our standing in the academic social hierarchy. We will never be proud of the number of articles that we have to reject, and we will not base an article's acceptance on how many PhDs the author has behind his/her name or what institution they are from. In fact, all of our articles that we send out for review are without any identifying information. And even though many of our articles are written by PhDs, we usually leave such titles off the articles so that the reader is not likewise biased. It would indeed be a worthy goal for all journals to likewise base their evaluations on content alone but such is not the case.^{1,2}

“...by publishing credible peer-reviewed articles in the field of Theoretics...”

Submitted Articles: We are having to reject over 60% of the articles that we receive. Sure some are the really fringe theories but that accounts for less than 10% of those that are rejected. Some papers are just data/experimental papers without a clear theory involved but again less than another 10% of the rejected articles. Some papers have a problem with the correct use of logic in their argument or they do not have the scientific data correct, but again these account for less than another 20% of the rejected articles. Most of the rejected articles are

rejected in the preliminary review that we do here but the rest are sent out for peer-review. Of the articles that are sent out, we have to reject most of them, because of a lack of resources to publish them all. We are therefore left with having to pick the cream of the crop and reject the others. We do try to encourage the authors to continue in their pursuit of scientific inquiry. Unlike long established journals that take pleasure in being able to reject a lot of papers, it is painful to us as we want to encourage everyone and discourage none. We could easily go to monthly or even semi-monthly publication with 5 original articles in each, but we don't have the finances or resources to do more. A price we pay for not charging our readers fees. It is that "*free of charge and accessible to all*" part of our mission statement that keeps it this way.

By being free of charge and using the publication format that will reach the masses (html and PDF rather than LaTeX et al), we have opened up scientific inquiry to all. To academics as well as those in the public sector, to the experimentalist as well as the computer programmer. Profession, title, employer, of social status should exclude a great mind from advancing Science.³ After 2 ½ years, I think that we have done very well (of course no bias here), but we could do more with more financial support (being a non-profit we rely on the generosity of others) and less hostility by the old guard journals and scientific press who see us as some new upstart that they must protect the unkempt masses from. But I say to you today, "Let everyone be infected by the Journal of Theoretics," and then maybe stimulating thought and inquiry will once again return to Science.⁴

References:

1. Peer Review: Reform or Revolution? Time to Open Up the Black Box of Peer Review. <http://www.junkscience.com/news/bmjpeer.html>.
2. "What Effect does Masking Author Identity have on Peer Review of Medical Journal Articles?" <http://www.ama-assn.org/sci-pubs/sci-news/1997/snr0917.htm#masking>.
3. "What is Science?" <http://www.journaloftheoretics.com/Editorials/Vol-1/e1-3.htm>.
4. "Why Theoretics?" <http://www.journaloftheoretics.com/Editorials/Vol-3/e3-5.htm>.

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