



Editorial

Peer Review of the Evidence Base

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Welcome to the first issue of the tenth volume of *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice (EBLIP)*. This issue is suitably full, reflecting the quantity and quality of submissions we continue to receive and publish. Inside, you will find 4 articles reporting on original research, 10 evidence summaries, 1 report about using evidence in practice, as well as a news item.

This is also my inaugural editorial as Editor-in-Chief. I have been involved with the journal since its inception in 2006, first as an evidence summary writer, then as the Associate Editor for evidence summaries, and then for articles. The journal editorial board also welcomes Rebekah (Becky) Willson (currently in Australia), as an Associate Editor for articles, and Melissa Griffiths (in the United Kingdom) as Editorial Intern.

One of the reasons the journal has been so successful at publishing quality papers is its reliance on peer review. Every few years, it

seems the subject of peer review arises again in the scholarly sphere as a topic of controversy. I have always found these discussions interesting and revealing, because, despite peer review's longevity and pervasiveness in traditional scholarly publishing, it seems there is always the argument that peer review needs improvement.

And it probably does. I have written before about the importance of post-publication peer review (Kloda, 2009), in which I argued that peer review is not an excuse for not engaging critically with published work. Nevertheless, peer review is an important process by which submitted manuscripts are evaluated before being considered for publication. It is especially important that submissions to this journal are peer reviewed by experts not only in research methods and the subject content, but also those fluent in issues important to practitioners. This journal has a wide audience of librarians and information professionals, as well as instructors and researchers in library and information

studies. In order to be useful for these practitioners, manuscripts should make very clear the applicability of research results to practice.

EBLIP is similar to many other journals, open access or otherwise, in that we employ double-blind peer review in the editorial decision making process. The process is straightforward: all original research articles, feature articles, evidence summaries, classics, and review articles that are submitted for consideration are first read by the assigned editor to ensure the manuscript is within the journal's scope. Once the editor has confirmed that the submission has been properly blinded, i.e., no information about the authors is discernable from reading the manuscript, at least two peer reviewers are invited to review the submission. Peer reviewers are typically selected for their expertise, not just in the methods, but for all aspects of the manuscript. Peer reviewers are provided with guidelines which include questions about the research question or objectives(s) of the study, the literature review and references, the methods, presentation of findings, discussion, and implications for practice. That last element is so important for *EBLIP*, given its intended audience and its goal of transferring evidence into practice.

After these initial steps, the peer reviewers submit their reviews to the editor, who then considers their comments when making a decision as to whether to accept or reject the manuscript for publication. In many cases, an acceptance is conditional on revisions, and sometimes authors are asked to make thorough revision requiring resubmission for a second round of peer review. The editor then communicates their decision back to the author(s) with their suggested revisions and includes the reviews, anonymously.

The purpose of peer review is not to identify fraudulent research or plagiarism, but to ensure that any manuscript that is published is relevant, has sound methodology, and is a

clearly written report of research undertaken. The contribution of a peer reviewer is not trivial. Peer reviewing research in librarianship is an important service to the profession, as well as a contribution to scholarship. It is the voluntary donation of one's time and expertise for the sake of knowledge, and in the case of *EBLIP*, for the sake of influencing practice.

Though we have a long list of peer reviewers here at *EBLIP*, it is often difficult to find individuals willing to review, especially in areas for which there are few experts. An editor for an engineering journal recently lamented on the subject of securing peer reviewers, "It is not rare to have 10 refusals to every acceptance" (Dasco, 2014). Fortunately, we do not have this challenging a ratio, though our Associate Editors frequently need to ask four or five individuals before two reviewers, the minimum number required, accept. Peer reviewers for *EBLIP* routinely review four or more manuscripts in a given year, though we try not to overburden any one reviewer.

Because the work of a peer reviewer is essential in supporting the work of journal editors and the manuscript authors in ensuring quality, we try to reward reviewers by sharing with them the editor's decision (accept, reject, revise, resubmit), and the comments of the other reviewers. Reviewers' comments are shared anonymously, and our intention in doing this is to allow peer reviewers to learn from each other's comments and understand how their review contributes to the editorial process.

Peer review is an important part of dissemination of scholarly work, yet it is a type of labour that goes unpaid. Librarians' and information studies researchers' time is valuable. I encourage readers of scholarly literature to offer their services as peer reviewers in areas where they may have expertise, as there is a lot to be learned from peer reviewing about the research and writing processes, and it can be very rewarding. In selecting journals to

contribute to as a peer reviewer, I encourage you to think about open access journals that rely entirely on the labour of volunteers, such as *EBLIP*, when deciding where to offer your expertise and services.

References

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