

Should journals provide financial assistance to reviewers for reviewing the manuscripts?

Every reputed publisher becomes big because of the quality of the manuscripts they are able to maintain in the long run. The peer-reviewing process is the backbone of the publishing industry, which helps maintain the quality and authenticity of the research a journal publishes. Peer reviewers are usually the scientists and faculty working in academic and research institutions. When a journal receives a manuscript, they do a technical check on the manuscript and forward it to reviewers for peer review. Reviewers receive an email from a journal requesting peer review, and the reviewer has to decide whether to accept or reject the review request of the journal. If the reviewer accepts the review invitation, the journal gives a few weeks to the reviewer to read and comment on the manuscript; if the reviewer rejects the invitation, the peer review request is forwarded to another reviewer by the journal. The process is thus going on till a reviewer accepts the invitation.

After accepting a review invitation, the reviewer has to devote a lot of time, knowledge, and expertise to commenting on the manuscript. It is a responsible task that can affect the decision of the editor towards accepting or rejecting a manuscript. The saddest thing about the review process is that even after putting in so much effort, the reviewers did not get any financial benefits from the review process. Reputed publishers, especially those who publish research papers exclusively in an open assessment model, charge a huge publishing fee from the authors but do not provide any part of it to the reviewers who make a lot of effort in bringing the manuscript to the publishing end.

Reviewers are also human, working as scientists and faculty members in various government and private institutions. They also have a family to feed and research work to be carried out for which they need funding. Journals which are making huge money from the publishing business are devoid of reviewers from financial assistance. If the reviewers were provided with financial assistance, they would be happier and more likely to accept the review invitation of the journals. Reviewers can channel the money earned from the review process into their research which could further help in the development of scientific communities. When publishing becomes a business, and every stakeholder is earning their part, why have the selfless reviewers been left with the benefits?

For these reasons, we recommend that small payments for reviews be explored in conjunction with other continuing programs, such as making reviews publicly available to everybody (for example, by publishing online), training new reviewers, and providing rebates on article processing fees. Reviews that are paid for may attract more reviewers, particularly those who cannot work for free and are scholars. Payment may also promote faster and higher-quality evaluations, boost reviewer motivation, and even draw on the pool of retired scholars.

We understand that paying for reviews might cause a lot of controversy. The payment idea may undermine the core academic values of knowledge acquisition, raise the overall research expenditure, and leave some issues with the peer review system unresolved. Researchers are occasionally paid to review grant proposals and academic theses, so this concept should not be any different. This is in response to the first objection that financial incentives might corrupt the pure academic ethos of peer review. Budget-wise, we believe that it may be necessary to reallocate research money in order to cover the expense of conducting reviews, which is now covered by researchers' employers. Last but not least, we believe that paying for reviews should be objectively examined to determine its impact on other difficulties.

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