

Editorial

A Peek into *C&RL*'s Peer Review Process

It is always wonderful and an inspiring privilege to read, offer input, and shepherd so many colleagues' articles into the *C&RL* review process and beyond. Behind the scenes, there is a vibrant, lively network of conversation from peer reviewers, authors, editorial board, and ACRL staff, all working with me to help authors improve their work and share it with the world.

As of February 2024, *C&RL* has 110 peer reviewers in its system, which uses Open Journal Systems (OJS). Approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the 2023–2024 *C&RL* Editorial Board are reviewers in this list. Of this pool of reviewers, there is a wide range of expertise and research interests from which I draw. Sometimes when I cannot find a reviewer for a manuscript, I reach out to others in the field who have written or presented about the specific topic of the manuscript under review. This editorial aims to shed some light into the current *C&RL* review process as it stands.

Once I review a new submission to make sure it is anonymized and *C&RL* submission instructions have been followed, I send it out for double anonymous peer review. This part can often take a long time for a plethora of reasons. I invite 2–3 reviewers to review a submission. I rarely ever ask someone to review more than one submission at a time. Reviewers have one week to accept or decline the invitation. If accepted, reviewers are given four weeks to complete the review.

Given circumstances that happen in life and with a number of people involved, the whole peer review process may take more or less time than anticipated. The [C&RL Author Guidelines](#) currently state that the "...review process takes ten to twelve weeks. After the decision has been made, the editor writes to the author accepting the manuscript, accepting it contingent on revisions, or rejecting it." Although I try to make this deadline, sometimes for various reasons, it takes even more time. I encourage authors waiting for updates to write to me at ktotleben@library.rochester.edu. If I don't respond in a timely manner, please nudge me, and I will respond with updates.

The questions (with slight variation) the reviewers consider are in the [Author Guidelines](#) and in the corresponding "[Guide for Authors and Reviewers](#)," but for transparency, figure 1 shows what reviewers see when they begin reviewing a manuscript.

The editorial board and I have kept the current list of review questions the same since I have been in this role. As I understand it, the first question is repeated in the last question so that after the writing/feedback reflection period, the reviewer can determine if the answer is still the same or if there is the possibility to include the submission by thinking outside the box. There is also a choice to offer other feedback to the author(s) and/or to send exclusively to the editor for consideration.

After providing their comments, reviewers offer a recommendation: Accept Submission, Revisions Required, Resubmit for Review, Resubmit Elsewhere, or Decline Submission. When making decisions about the manuscript, I consider the reviewers' recommendations, plus their feedback. The feedback often tells me more about the recommendation and can assist with decision making. Sometimes the recommendations are the same or vastly different from one

FIGURE 1
C&RL Review Form Response

Peer Review: Original Submission:
Does it meet the scope and guidelines of the journal?*
Was there an introduction of topic/research question/background information?*
Does the literature review place the study or opinions in perspective and build on existing research? Are the sources appropriately documented?*
Is the method used appropriate to the subject, describing the strategy used in detail and addressing reliability and validity?*
Assess the analysis and logic of argumentation. Does the evidence presented support the hypothesis or do the findings have implications for scholarship or practice?*
Does the author communicate clearly with an educated, yet not necessarily specialized, audience? Are there presentations and illustrations that enhance the analysis and data presented?*
What is the relevance to advancing knowledge in the field of academic librarianship? Does the manuscript make a new contribution to the literature or to practice, by virtue of the method or findings?*
Does it meet the scope and guidelines of the journal?*
* Denotes required field

reviewer to the next. That's when the reviewer comments really help distinguish why the recommendation was made and further assists me in making an editorial decision.

Although I have not provided direct advice or guidance on *C&RL* peer reviewers' comments to authors, I have a few suggestions to share in this editorial:

- When offering input, the more specific, the better. It will help increase understanding of what a reviewer wishes to see in the submission. A guiding question could be: How could comments be expressed to best help the author(s) make constructive improvements whether the submission is accepted or not? Be honest and respectful of the authors' work.
- The priority in offering feedback is to answer the questions by examining the content itself. They focus on what is essential to include in *C&RL* submissions. Are the foundational components of the research intact? Is the methodology and/or analysis sound? Why or why not?

- Stylistic choices, punctuation, etc. can always be fixed later by the author(s) and in the copyediting phase (after acceptance). They are low priority in the peer review process. That said, it is always important that authors follow the guidelines for submission. If there is a glaring inattention to the guidelines, it could prove troublesome for how the content is presented and thus problematic for the submission's acceptance.
- Use your own words to write the comments. Do not share the manuscript with anyone else (human or non-human). When authors submit a manuscript, there is an understood trust that the peer reviewer will not share their work with anyone or anything else, unless the author gives permission.

The *C&RL* pool of peer reviewers, editorial board, and ACRL staff are all working together to make the best *C&RL* issues we can and help authors bring their unique perspectives and contributions to the profession. If you are interested in becoming a peer reviewer, please email me at ktotleben@library.rochester.edu and include your research experience, research interests, and a brief note as to why you would like to serve as a peer reviewer. To all reviewers, I extend my heartfelt thanks. The reviewers, with their support and constructive feedback, are truly the heart of *C&RL* as they help authors improve their submissions.

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