

## Editorial: Is the editor my peer?

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You write a manuscript that you think breaks new ground on a techno-scientifically important topic. You submit the manuscript to a well-known peer-reviewed journal. Within 10 days, you receive a letter of rejection. The manuscript was neither grammatically deficient nor poorly organized; to your knowledge, it reported original results. But, it had not been sent out for review by even one of your peers. Rejecting it, an editor had written a platitudinous letter to inform you of his/her decision. You ask yourself: Is that editor my peer?

Last week I examined the research credentials of the 18 editors of four highly cited journals publishing peer-reviewed research papers. All 12 gentlemen and six ladies hold doctorates in physics or related disciplines from major universities, which means that all had acquired some research experience. All four journals are focused on topics that are also covered in the *Journal of Nanophotonics*.

I sought data on the research publications of these 18 editors on Thomson Reuter's Web of Science. Three editors have common enough names that I was unable to easily distinguish their publications from those of others with the same initials and last names. Securitized data for the remaining 15 are presented in Table 1. The journals are identified as J1 to J4.

Table 1. Publication statistics of editors of four highly cited, peer-reviewed, and specialized journals. The names of the journals and the editors have not been identified here to protect their privacy. An asterisk indicates that the name of that editor is shared with such a large number of published researchers that data for him or her could not be isolated easily.

Journal	Editor	Number of Published Items	Number of Citations	<i>h</i> Index
J1	E11	24	112	2
	E12	*	*	*
	E13	6	1	1
	E14	1	0	0
J2	E21	13	263	6
	E22	43	769	9
	E23	35	124	5
	E24	43	461	12
J3	E31	*	*	*
	E32	17	206	9
	E33	22	12	2
	E34	*	*	*
	E35	57	273	10
J4	E41	17	406	9
	E42	65	530	12
	E43	26	180	8
	E44	115	80	4
	E45	6	0	0

I also collected similar data for another specialized journal that covers the same topics as the journals J1 to J4. This peer-reviewed journal is published by a learned society. It has 17 editors. The anonymous data are presented in Table 2, with the journal's name replaced by the code J5.

Table 2. Publication statistics of editors of a specialized journal published by a learned society. The names of the journal and its editors have not been identified here to protect their privacy. An asterisk indicates that the name of that editor is shared with such a large number of published researchers that data for him or her could not be isolated easily.

Journal	Editor	Number of Published Items	Number of Citations	<i>h</i> Index
J5	E51	67	584	14
	E52	98	935	17
	E53	128	1983	23
	E54	659	7167	34
	E55	137	1710	20
	E56	30	320	10
	E57	79	2659	31
	E58	145	1809	21
	E59	71	681	14
	E510	56	2177	22
	E511	65	568	13
	E512	*	*	*
	E513	114	2008	26
	E514	45	632	12
	E515	47	325	10
	E516	39	263	9
	E517	78	1770	25

All five journals began publication during the present decade. Let me add that, collectively, most of the publications of the editors of the journals J1 to J4 do not report their authors' research, but the vast majority of the publications of every editor of the journal J5 do.

Whereas the editors of the journal J5 are indeed your peers with credentials vetted by the elected office-bearers of a learned society, and some may have much greater seniority in the research arena than you, comparison of the data in the two tables would help you decide if the editors of the journals J1 to J4 are also your peers. Although every research paper published in those journals is peer-reviewed, would you still call journals J1 to J4 peer-reviewed?