Decision-making process for journal articles

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“In spite of the centrality of the editorship role, there is much mystery surrounding the nature and notion of editorship..... Many scholars, not merely the novices, are unaware of editorial practices, processes, and strategies. Misinformation and lack of awareness might obstruct judgement in navigating the publication process. It might even lead to poor handling of the process, which would hamper the chances of eventually publishing good manuscripts.” (Baruch et al. 2008, p. xxi)

The above quotation comes from a book entitled *Opening the black box of editorship*, which implies that doing an editorial duty seems regarded as a black box. This editorial is an attempt to show an aspect of the black box: that is, *the editorial process*, to those who are interested in submitting their works to the *WMU Journal of Maritime Affairs* (JOMA) for publication.

Like other referred publication outlets, JOMA is an internationally peer-reviewed journal that covers such subject areas as maritime safety, maritime energy, marine environment protection, and maritime management and operations and gives special attention to human factors, impacts of technology, and policy-making in this context. Peer reviews are the very key to ensure that a submitted manuscript stands up to the level for publication. It is well understood that peer-reviewing is not perfect but the best available option in a scientific community (Times Higher Education 2018) as a way to play a gatekeeping role for the whole process of knowledge generation and dissemination.

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Each journal has its own uniqueness in terms of editorial procedures. What is described below is the one applied to JOMA as the way to ensure the quality of published articles at the journal.

Overall, it has two different stages of editorial procedures: the *initial process* stage and the *review process* stage. In the former stage, when a manuscript is submitted and come into the editorial system—the Springer calls it the ‘Editorial Manager’—the editor-in-chief is to check the similarity score and other related matters—a sort of checking point for possible academic dishonesty—of the submitted manuscript and read it in a brief manner to see whether or not the nature and contents of the manuscript are in line with the Journal’s aims and scope. When either of these two check-ups is unsatisfactory, the editor-in-chief is to reject it as an initial editorial decision—that is generally called a desk rejection. In case that a manuscript is poorly written, the editor returns it to the author(s) for further work.

Having successfully passed the first hurdle, the manuscript comes to the review process stage. In this latter stage, the editor-in-chief makes two actions. Firstly, when a manuscript falls into the domain of IAMU (viz., maritime education and training), he assigns it to the IAMU Section editor to handle the necessary review process.¹ Secondly, when a manuscript falls into other subject areas, he searches two (sometimes, three) potential reviewers in the same field of the manuscript and requests them to give their professional views on its quality and publish-ability.

The outcome of the review process is one of the following: (i) to accept as it is, which is very rare, (ii) to reject, which comes occasionally, (iii) to suggest minor changes, and (iv) to recommend major changes. Those manuscripts fallen into the categories of minor or major changes, the most commonly suggested cases, are returned to their author(s) to make a revision and resubmission for another round (2nd to 3rd round for some cases) of review processes until all the reviewers, plus the editor-in-chief or IAMU Section editor, are satisfied with revised works. In general, the minor changes could be done over six months or less, while the major revision could be made for more than six months but preferably less than a year. The figure below illustrates those processes mentioned.

¹ * The IAMU Section editor will in due course prepare an editorial to show his editorial philosophy, and expectations and requirements from IAMU Section articles.

As can be seen in these editorial and reviewing processes, the publication of journal articles can be regarded a production process—the so-called *knowledge generating process*—that are jointly made by authors, reviewers and editors. All these parties hold their own function and responsibility having ensured that their subject discipline is continuously progressing in terms of value created by the knowledge and added to the community where they work in. In this sense, researchers are knowledge workers (Page 2018) and the publication is a co-production and co-evolution process (Chen 2010).

Looking forward to welcoming you as an author and reviewer into this process.

Your editor-in-chief,
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