An Excellent Opportunity for Mentoring

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I recently learned of an interesting reviewing practice utilized by the journal *Ecology* (*Ecology*, ISSN 1939-9170, <https://esajournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/19399170>). When invitations to review a manuscript are sent to potential referees, the referee is asked if they know a graduate student, post doc, or other associate who would like to co-review with the referee. The idea is that the referee would mentor their junior associate in the reviewing process. Both referees would turn in the same review, and the junior referee would receive credit for completing the review just as the senior referee would.

When I learned of this practice, I was struck at how simple an idea it is, and also at how powerful this sort of mentorship could be. Partnering a junior researcher with a more experienced referee, and then reviewing the same

manuscript together is an excellent way to gain experience in technical reviewing. Many journal referees have had little or no formal training in peer review, other than learning as they go after their first invitation to become a referee. Certainly, there are a number of peer review training resources available; for example, many professional societies and some of the larger journals offer online training in peer review. While this type of training is helpful, learning to review in a hands-on manner from a colleague you know, someone who is willing and interested in taking the time to share their knowledge and experience with you, would be invaluable. The journal *Ecology* should be acknowledged not only for employing this co-review idea, but also for the way they implement it. Directly asking the referee in the invitation-to-review email is a great way of putting this practice front and center, and making it very easy for the referee to nominate a colleague to team up with.

In addition to helping someone become a better referee, learning how to perform a proper peer review would also help one become a better author. Learning to technically review someone else's work is a great way to also learn the best practices for scholarly communication, and the pitfalls to avoid in writing a technical manuscript. Lessons learned about what worked and what didn't work in someone else's manuscript are easily carried over when writing your own article. And of course such learnings would not be limited only to journal articles; they would be applicable to any kind of technical writing—lab reports, company memos, research proposals, technical marketing materials, manuals, and product documentation, to name just a few.

MMA will shortly be adopting this practice. I hope our reviewers who are in a position to mentor a junior colleague will consider doing so. If any of our readers or reviewers have other suggestions along these lines, I would love to hear from you: ryan.deacon@asminternational.org.

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