In Praise of Reviewer 2

This editorial is intended to thank all those who agree to undertake reviews for *The International Journal of Children’s Rights* – even the much-maligned Reviewer 2. Of course, Reviewer 2 is not necessarily Reviewer 2 at all – they may, in fact, be Reviewer 1 (the Editor’s top pick), but most editors will open with the more positive review out of kindness, especially where one review is particularly critical.

We are deeply grateful to all those who undertake reviews for the journal. The system of unpaid peer review is the subject of much criticism, but it is currently the best we have, and we are doing our best to make it work. That has, however, become notably harder over the last year. Our hearts sink most mornings as we open our emails to find another “Reviewer declines to review” email. Of course, there are lots of good reasons for this – we know that many of the people that we approach are veteran reviewers and, at any given time, have a backlog due to their willingness to accept review requests. Others like ourselves are Editors of journals and inundated with new papers to read (and reviewers to find and chase up). However, it has now become routine for us to approach up to six or seven reviewers before we can get two acceptances. That’s a lot of time spent that could be spent elsewhere.

The field of children’s rights is unusual in that it is both small yet broad: our network of child rights scholars is strong and often generous with their time, but we receive papers from many others who consider that their work falls within our parameters. We desk reject many papers that have added a mention of the UNCRC in the introduction and/or conclusion but do not otherwise engage with children’s rights. Equally, we are keen to include new voices and new disciplinary perspectives on children’s rights. To ensure the quality of what we publish (and the future of the field), we rely on peer review. Our authors, often young scholars trying to establish themselves, also need the...
feedback and the hallmark of peer-reviewed publications. When we choose reviewers, we try to approach an established and an early career scholar. The response from the latter is that they often learn a lot just in the act of reviewing: it can help an author position themselves and identify where their own work sits in the rich tapestry of child rights research.

Reviews do not have to be long or detailed. We need to know if the work makes a contribution to the field and is robust. Anything beyond this is a bonus for the author enabling them to enhance their work wherever it is published. Acting as Editors has opened our eyes to the reviewing process: reviewers have identified blatant plagiarism, scholars whose work has not been acknowledged as authors and flaws in research design and understanding. They are also often glowing about the papers we send them, and we take a lot of delight in forwarding those reviews. So please accept our requests if you can. Be constructive and, most of all, be kind.

So, thank you Reviewer 2 (and 1) for stepping up to support and sustain the field of children’s rights.

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