

These guides are tools designed for library leaders to use for organizing a summer- or semester-long discussion series. Each guide offers a brief scoping statement, a suggested reading or resource to review, and a set of discussion questions to launch an hour-long informal conversation among library staff.

revised May 2008

Developed by the Association of Research Libraries  
Office of Scholarly Communication

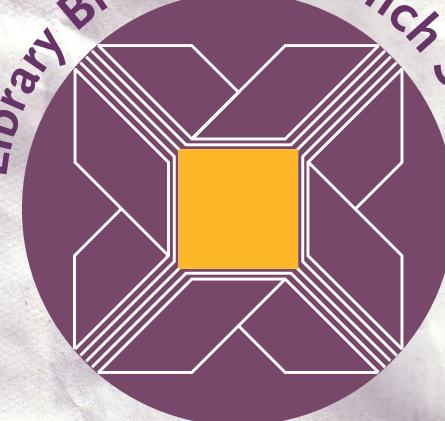
The complete series is at [www.arl.org/sc/brownbag/](http://www.arl.org/sc/brownbag/)



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Library Brown Bag Lunch Series



## Issues in Scholarly Communication

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Discussion Leader's Guide

Peer Review

# Peer Review

## Discussion Leader's Guide (revised May 2008)

Each brown bag session provides an opportunity for participants to deepen their understanding of a particular set of issues involved in the changing processes of scholars' communication efforts. This guide is designed for a simple hour-long lunchtime discussion. Prework will be essential in creating common ground and providing a foundation for the conversation. Distribute the assignment at least a week prior to the session. A list of discussion questions are arranged in sequence below, but feel free to skip some if you want to spend more time on particular questions. It is not necessary to distribute the questions before the session; however, if you think it would be helpful to your group in launching discussion, consider sharing a couple of the questions in advance.

### Scoping Statement

Peer review is the fundamental process used to evaluate scholars and scholarship. Although a wide variety of practices are employed in peer review processes, these processes play extremely valuable roles in the lives and work of researchers. Any discussion of change in scholarly communication activities must recognize the key role peer review plays in apportioning the rewards of research and scholarship as well as in signaling to readers and colleagues the important qualities of their resulting works.

### Goals

Participants will strengthen their understanding of the range of peer evaluations inherent in the research process and frequently integrated into scholarly communication processes.

Participants will prepare to discuss with faculty common misconceptions about the use of peer review processes in new publishing models.

### Optional Tools for Facilitating Discussion

- A flip chart or white board for brainstorming and gathering responses, particularly for the later questions.
- Copies of your campus promotion and tenure policies.

### Prework for Participants

(Distribute prior to the session.)

Elizabeth Wager. "What is it for? Analysing the purpose of peer review." *Nature* (2006) <http://www.nature.com/nature/peerreview/debate/nature04990.html>

### Discussion Questions

- ⊗ Peer review is a very broad term, sometimes used to describe review processes used to identify books and articles appropriate for publication or for career advancement through promotion and tenure decisions. Some disciplines use peer review procedures to select conference presentations. What kinds of peer evaluation processes are researchers encountering in disciplines with which you work?
- ⊗ Many new digital publications use quite traditional peer review processes. What are some examples of this in the publications of disciplines you are familiar with? Why has there been a general practice of using established peer review models for publications that themselves are quite novel?
- ⊗ Do criteria used for promotion and tenure at your institution include references to peer reviewed publications? What role do these publications play?
- ⊗ How does the importance of peer review decisions of various sorts differ among different scholars and researchers?
- ⊗ Do you think there is a perception that electronic publishing is incompatible with peer review? How might one challenge such an assumption?
- ⊗ Peer review provides a variety of functions that have been described as including registration, certification, awareness, archiving and rewarding. In what ways might it be possible to create new mechanisms for handling some of those functions?

### Further Reading

King, Diane Harley, Sarah Earl-Novell, Jennifer Arter, Shannon Lawrence, and Irene Perciali. *Scholarly Communication: Academic Values and Sustainable Models*. C. Judson Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. July 27, 2006.

[http://cshe.berkeley.edu/publications/docs/scholarlycomm\\_report.pdf](http://cshe.berkeley.edu/publications/docs/scholarlycomm_report.pdf)



Jaschik, Scott. "Abandoning Print, Not Peer Review," *Inside Higher Ed* (February 28, 2008)

<http://insidehighered.com/news/2008/02/28/open>

"Nature Peer Review: Debate," *Nature Web Focus*

<http://www.nature.com/nature/peerreview/debate/index.html>