

What journal editors want

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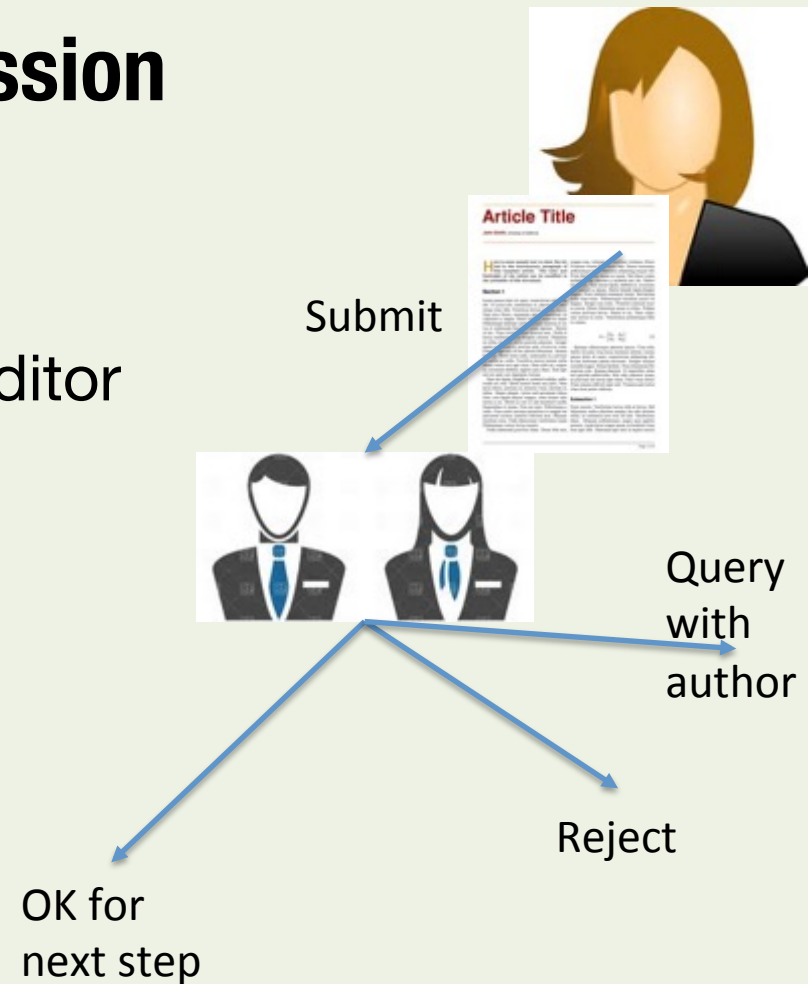
Opening up the black box

- What happens at submission
 - Why some things take so long
 - Why some things happen too quickly
- How to improve acceptance success
 - Reasons for rejection
 - Reasons for acceptance

WHAT HAPPENS AT SUBMISSION

On submission

- The editorial office
 - Managing editor, Assistant editor
- Article checks
 - Completeness
 - Initial suitability
 - Plagiarism

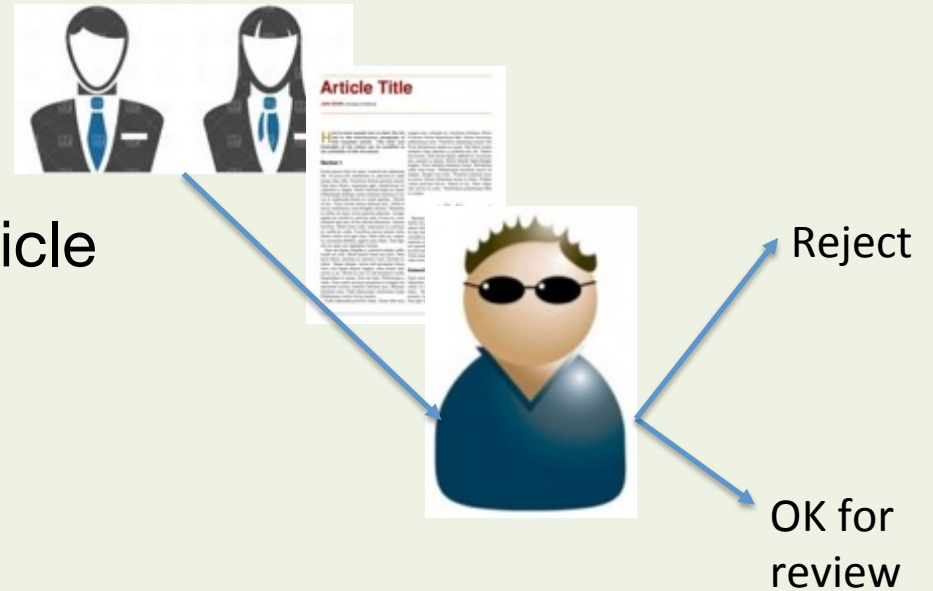


After first checks

- Either ...

- The editor receives the article

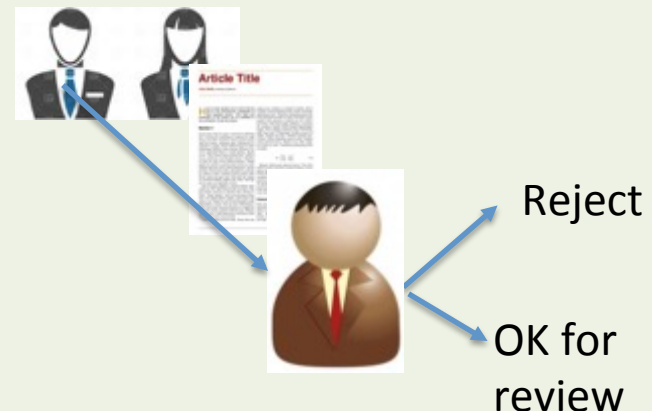
- Initial decision to reject
- Sends for review



- Or ...

- The editor (or editorial office) send to handling editor

- (also called Associate Editor, Section Editor, etc.)
- Initial decision to reject
- Sends for review

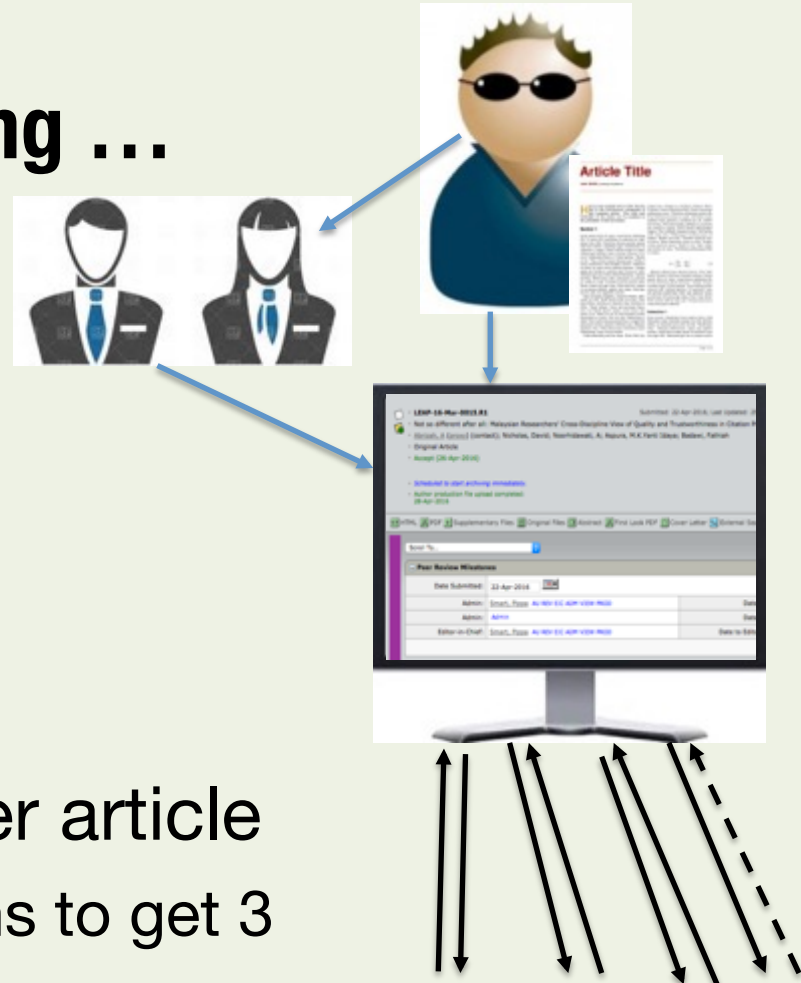


Immediate rejection

- Common in high-impact journals
 - *Science* rejects over 70% before review
 - Even *PLOS One* rejects c.30% before review
- Why?
 - Out of scope
 - Fit (style, journal objectives)
 - Novelty
 - Fraud (plagiarism, etc.)
 - Missing parts (figures, references, etc.)

Reviewing ...

- Reviewers are selected
 - From database
 - From online search
 - From references
 - From editorial board
- Commonly 3 reviewers per article
 - May take up to 8+ invitations to get 3

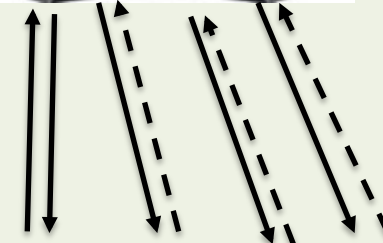


... and reviewing ...

- Reviewers commonly given 2 weeks
- They are (frequently) late
- Can easily take twice as long
 - Several chase emails are regularly sent
 - At what point is someone else invited?
 - And given another 2 weeks ...

Reviewer comments

- May be contradictory
- May be unhelpful
 - They may have misunderstood the article
 - They may have a CoI preventing review
 - So someone else has to be asked
- Further reviewers may be required
 - As arbitrators
 - Statistical reviewers



This all takes time !

CHRISTMAS DECEMBER 1941 BIRTHDAYS TOO

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2 Nancy Stevens	3 Arnold Luie Desilets	4	5	6 Laconia. <u>Beautiful</u> day. 
7 Pearl Harbor	8 Immaculate Conception	9	10	11 Charles Hammond	12	13
14	15 Aunt Mollie Gladye Redlon	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25 Christmas Waverly H. R. Chamberlain	26	27
28 Xmas gift.	29	30 Brenda M. L.	31 Walter ¹⁹²⁷ Harriman - 17 Baldwin St. Jr. Horn		Flowers for December Narcissus or Holly Birthstone...Turquoise	

The charm of Christmas lies in the thought that we live in the memory of our friends.

What next

- The handling/editor makes decision
 - Accept
 - Reject
 - Revision required
 - Minor
 - Major
 - Further analysis
 - Further experiments
 - Etc.

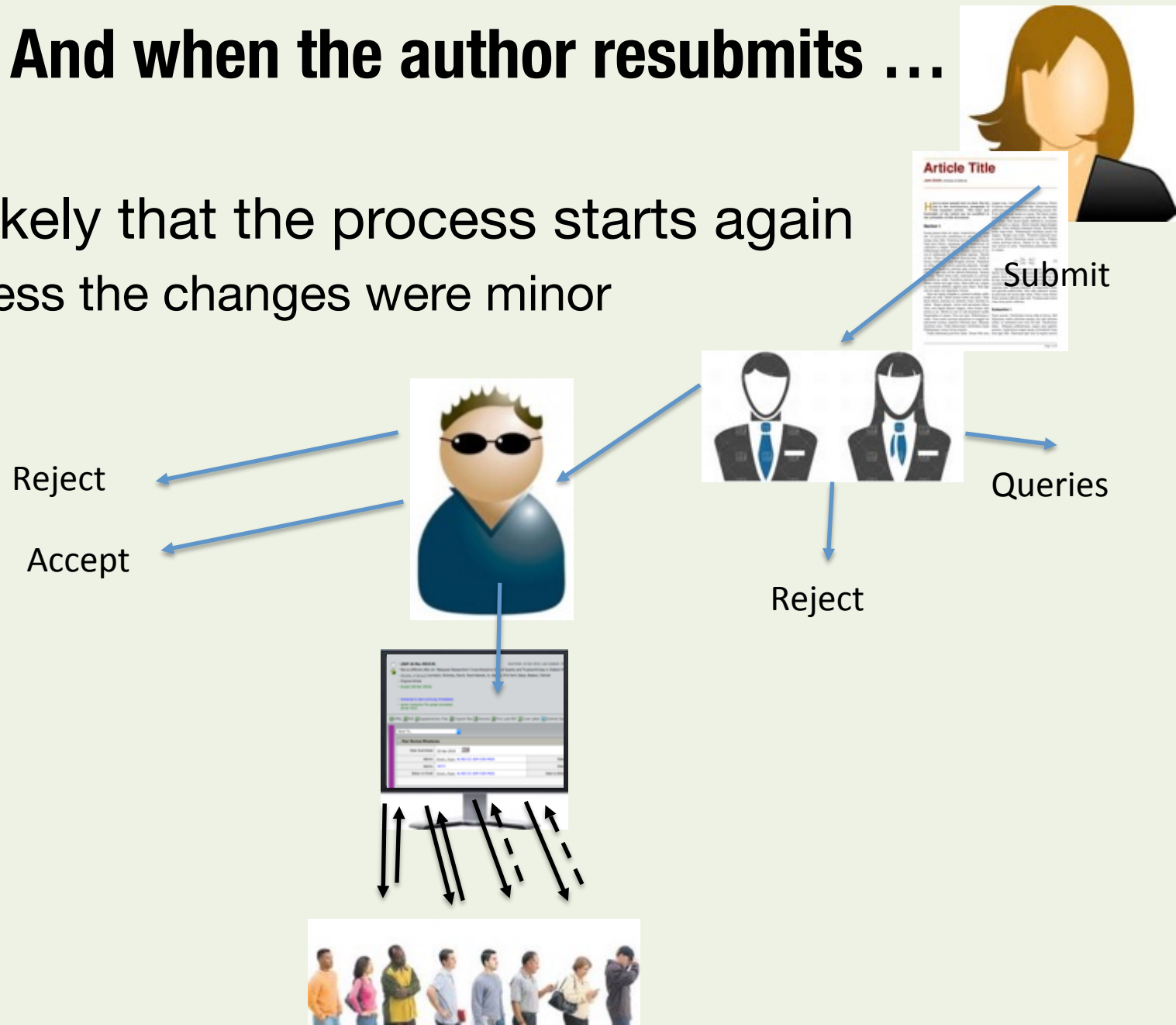


This needs more work



And when the author resubmits ...

- It is likely that the process starts again
 - Unless the changes were minor



IMPROVING ACCEPTANCE RATES

The basics

- Read the author guidelines
- Check the journal scope
- Ensure you are submitting to a suitable journal
- Make sure your article is the best it can be...

Guidelines from *Diabetologia* (2011)

- Nothing hides bad research: ask the right question, plan the right experiment, use the right methods, analyse results correctly, and draw sensible conclusions.
- A paper should have a message, a message that you could write out in two or three sentences
- Show your paper to colleagues – look for criticism
- The best diagrams get shown time and again in review lectures, while papers with no visual content tend to get forgotten
- Revise your article before submission – by 25%

Other guidelines

“Editors cannot be experts in every area that their journal covers.”

“The author’s job is to intrigue the editor and later on the reviewers, and convince them of the relevance of their work”

What Editors Want: Philippa Benson and Susan Silver

A good article ...

- Is attractive to the editors
 - Makes them want to read it all
- Communicates its message clearly
 - Clearly written
 - Clearly structured
- Encourages citation
 - Through its content

How long?

- Short, direct articles have become more prestigious

Scientific publishers are killing research papers: arstechnica, 18 June 2016

- They are more likely to be accepted, read, cited

Don't make overblown claims

- Look at this cool thing we did.
- This is how we did the cool thing.
- This is the cool thing.
- Wasn't that cool?

- NOT

- Look at this cool thing we did, IT IS REALLY COOL, BE INTERESTED.
- This is how we did the cool thing (apart from this bit that we "forgot" to mention, the other thing that we didn't think was important, and that bit that a company contributed and wants to keep a secret. Have fun replicating the results!).
- This is the cool thing.
- This thing we did is not only cool, but is totally going to cure cancer, even if we never mentioned cancer and, in fact, are studying the ecology of the lesser spotted physicist.

- **Scientific publishers are killing research papers:** arstechnica, 18 June 2016

Make sure your article has a message

- Article title:
 - Urine TMPRSS2:ERG Fusion Transcript Stratifies Prostate Cancer Risk in Men with Elevated Serum PSA
- Key message
 - Urine predicts prostate cancer risk
- An article without a message is not worth publishing

Write concisely

- Either:
 - The application of repeatedly moving the arm horizontally down, and in contact with, the feline anterior aspect has been found efficacious in the alleviation of a variety of conditions associated with stress and anxiety within certain sections of the population.

Write concisely

- Either:
 - The application of repeatedly moving the arm horizontally down, and in contact with, the feline anterior aspect has been found efficacious in the alleviation of a variety of conditions associated with stress and anxiety within certain sections of the population.
- Or:
 - Some people find stroking a cat relaxing.



**Use structure
to 'sell' the
message**

Reasons for rejection (2)

- Wrong paper, wrong journal
 - Read the guidelines
- Mismatch of quality
 - Don't aim too high
- Journal backlog increasing rejection
 - Just unlucky
- Too many articles on the same topic
 - Check before submitting – or just unlucky
- Badly written
 - Explain yourself more clearly
- Flawed science
 - Be honest with yourself

What Editors Want: Phlippa Benson and Susan Silver

FINAL WORDS

Remember

- Editors are human
 - Flawed, biased, opinionated
 - Want their journal to be THE BEST
 - Want THE BEST articles
- Reviewers are normal, busy, people
 - Who want to do the right thing – but life gets in the way
- A quick decision is likely to be negative

Thank you !

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