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# AAUP Handbook: Best Practices for Peer Review

2015-16 AAUP Acquisitions Editorial Committee

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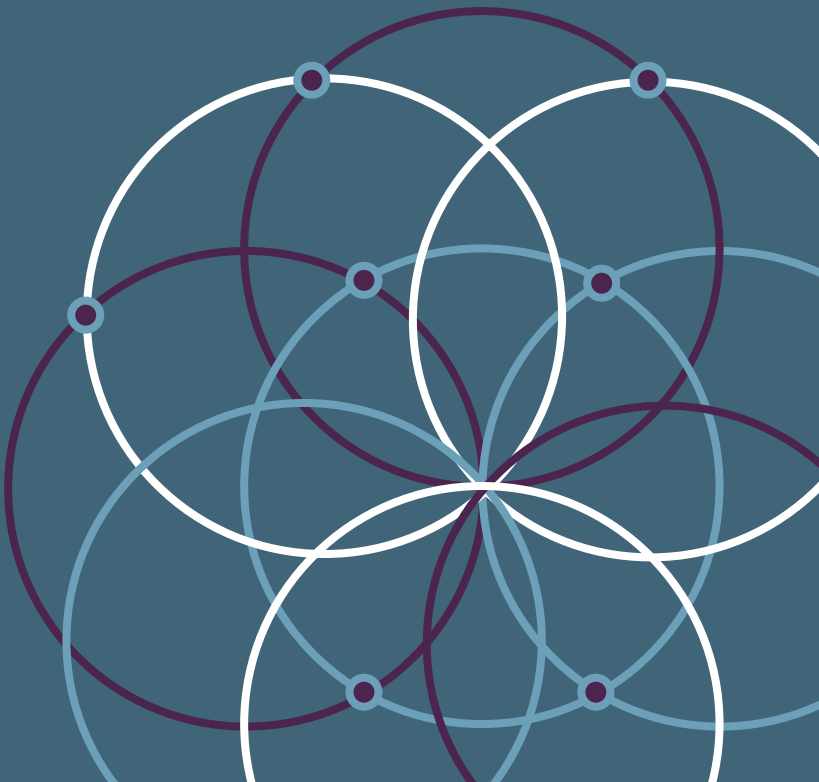
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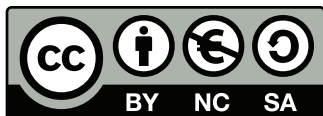
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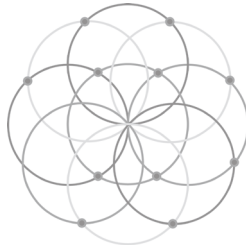
AAUP HANDBOOK

# Best Practices for Peer Review





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AAUP Handbook

# **Best Practices for Peer Review**

APRIL 2016

The Association of American University Presses (AAUP) advances the essential role of a global community of publishers whose mission is to ensure academic excellence and cultivate knowledge. High standards of editorial quality and peer review are one of the primary ways that AAUP members advance that mission. Demonstration of these standards in their publication programs is central to the membership eligibility of nonprofit scholarly publishers, and is the very substance of AAUP members' authority to validate and disseminate long-form scholarship.

AAUP offers this handbook of *Best Practices in Peer Review* as a resource for member publishers, acquisitions editors both new and experienced, faculty editorial boards, scholarly authors and researchers, and new scholarly publishing programs.

The *Best Practices* handbook was developed by the Association's Acquisition Editorial Committee through a consensus-building two-year process to articulate a set of practices that comprise a rigorous process of peer review. The Committee has rightly noted that, "the peer review process is highly complex, involves many individuals, and must be responsive to the norms of the appropriate fields." Disciplinary expectations, administrative procedures, inter-disciplinary and creative works, and innovative publishing formats may all demand changes in approach. However, well-reasoned differences in practices can only be evaluated against a solid understanding of what constitutes a standard practice of high-quality peer review.

The effort to draft these *Best Practices* began under the aegis of the 2014-15 AAUP Acquisitions Editorial Committee, chaired by Mark Francis (then at California, now Michigan) and was completed by the 2015-16 Committee, chaired by Mick Gusinde-Duffy (Georgia). The committee gathered information and feedback from a wide subset of AAUP member publishers to ensure the document is broadly reflective of accepted standards. An early draft was brought to a Peer Review Collaboration Lab, organized by Dan Williams (TCU), at AAUP's 2015 Annual Meeting in Denver. The final document is a product of significant work and consultation from many individuals in the AAUP community, and AAUP is grateful for all these contributions.

The core values of the Association include integrity, diversity, intellectual freedom, and stewardship. These values are reflected in work our members do to promote and disseminate scholarship, and the standards of peer review in monographic publishing are a key part of what sustains them. *Best Practices in Peer Review* helps to articulate how this works and will be a living foundation for integrity and stewardship.

Peter Berkery  
Executive Director  
Association of American University Presses

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## Preamble. Why Peer Review Is Important

Peer review is essential to the university press mission of advancing and disseminating scholarship. Peer review is the process through which university press editors commission formal evaluations from respected experts (“peers”) on the contribution to scholarship, teaching, and public debate of a work being considered for publication. These formal evaluations are considered by press staff and shared and discussed with authors as a crucial prepublication step in an editor’s evaluation of the merits of proposed projects. This process provides feedback that is both stringent and fair, enables an author to strengthen a work in progress, and adds value and meaning to the work that is ultimately published, helping inform the deliberations of press staff. By facilitating the review process, university press editors enlist the expertise of a wide community of experts to create productive conversations between reviewers and the authors whose work they are asked to evaluate.

As a principal university press advocate, the Association of American University Presses (AAUP) actively supports the essential role peer review plays in developing and validating high quality scholarly publications. This is reflected in the AAUP’s membership eligibility requirements, which require some form of peer review for projects published by member presses.

The purpose of this document, written by the AAUP’s Acquisitions Editorial Committee, is to articulate a set of practices that comprise a rigorous process of peer review. The Committee acknowledges, however, that the peer review process is highly complex, involves many individuals, and must be responsive to the norms of the appropriate fields. Thus, while the steps discussed below are recognized as generally acceptable best practices, this document is not intended to prescribe the conduct of an acceptable peer review in every case. Moreover, though strong peer reviews are necessary for moving forward with a project, they form only one part of a broad range of factors, including considerations of fit and budget, that together lead to a publishing decision.

## Section 1. The AE's Choices about Why, When, and How to Conduct Peer Review

### *When does the peer review process begin?*

The initiation of peer review depends in part on the stage at which a project reaches the press. If a project first is submitted to or invited by the acquisitions editor (AE) at the proposal stage, peer review offers the AE a chance to develop a project, to stave off competition from other presses, and to shape the project to best fit the press's editorial program. If a project is placed under contract at the proposal stage, it is good practice to have the full manuscript draft peer reviewed when it is complete as well. Works initially submitted as complete manuscripts receive one or more rounds of review. It is especially common for first books to be subject to several rounds of review and revision, depending on initial reviews and manuscript and audience aspirations, whereas the work of more experienced authors may more commonly receive only one round of peer review.

Regardless of the stage and circumstances under which peer review is successfully completed and a contract for a book signed, university press contracts usually specify that publication is contingent upon both peer reviews of the complete manuscript and the project's acceptance by the press's faculty or governance board. AEs at most presses will not present a work to the faculty or governance board for final approval unless it is in a penultimate or final draft.

### *What are some exceptions to the general practice of seeking peer review before offering a contract? Is peer review ever waived?*

Each press has its own criteria for deciding which types of books can be put under contract prior to peer review. Sometimes a decision to offer a contract is time sensitive: situations involving an agent or competition with other presses may not allow sufficient time for complete review of a proposal or manuscript. But even

under pressured conditions, the AE will often draw on his or her advisory network for a quick or informal vetting the project and the author's reputation. Projects placed under contract prior to peer review normally will later be presented to the faculty board, and at that point, peer reviews of the full manuscript will be required.

AEs may also proceed without peer review when working with new editions of previously published works, copublications with international publishers, translations, and occasionally works intended for general readers. Even in these cases, the AE may wish to solicit reviews to assist with revising such manuscripts or positioning them in the marketplace. Projects should be excused from peer review rarely and only for carefully considered reasons.

### ***Do different types of books require different types of peer reviews?***

Scholarly monographs, general interest (trade) titles, textbooks, reference works, professional volumes, art and architecture books, fiction and poetry are distinct genres with different readerships. Since one goal of peer review is to evaluate a manuscript's appeal to its intended audience, the review process should be aligned with the specific expectations for these different types of books. For instance, a textbook for classroom use would not be expected to focus primarily on cutting-edge research in the same way that a monograph would. Peer reviewers of a textbook might be asked about the accessibility of the writing and about classroom potential in addition to the currency of the content. Reviewers of a trade project might focus on the project's contribution to a broader public conversation or on the author's narrative skill, as opposed to its engagement with contemporary scholarly discourse. In general, the AE should formulate questions for the peer reviewer that clarify the work's intentions and guide the reviewer in assessing its strengths and weaknesses in light of its intended readership. (See *Guidelines for reviewers* below.)

### ***Do different disciplines have different types of peer reviews?***

Different disciplines work with distinct materials and methods, and so it is inevitable that they will bring different criteria and conventions to the process of evaluating books. A review of an edited volume in economics, for example, might address a decidedly different set of questions than a report on a monograph in literary criticism. AEs are typically attuned to such variation, as are faculty board members, who take it into account in their assessment of a work.

### ***Do multimodal projects such as digital platforms, apps, and enhanced ebooks require a different type of review than do printed books and standard ebooks?***

All projects that bear the imprint of a university press, including digital projects and publications, should be peer reviewed to ensure that they are aligned with the mission of the press. The timing and choice of reviewers will vary greatly, however, depending on the scope of the project. Large or multimedia projects may require an editorial board that guides development from the proposal stage onward. In addition to scholars in the field, technical experts may need to be enlisted to make sure that user interfaces comply with state-of-the-art technology and best digital practices. Whether a digital project will be presented to the faculty board for approval, and at what stage, will vary from press to press and may depend on the nature of the project. Scholarly digital initiatives are producing new modes and forms of publishing, and the dynamism of these developments requires ongoing assessment of conventional peer review processes.

### ***Confidentiality and anonymity in the peer review process***

University presses typically promise anonymity to their peer reviewers with the intention of assuring a candid discussion of a project's weaknesses and strengths. In contrast to the review of journal articles, the book manuscript review process is

not generally double-blind, given the challenges of masking an author's identity in full-length manuscripts. Book manuscript peer reviewers also assess the standing of an author's work in his or her field, the place of the current manuscript in an author's oeuvre, and the reception of previous publications as part of the overall project assessment.

In some cases, peer reviewers may wish to reveal their identity to the author whose work is being reviewed. It is good practice in these cases for the AE to first show an anonymous version of the peer review to the author, so that the author's first response is not influenced by the identity of the peer reviewer. Once the author has had a chance to consider the report, the AE may then choose to reveal the reviewer's identity but is not obliged to do so. It can be fruitful for an author and reviewer to be in contact, either directly or via the AE, for additional consultation on revisions.

To assure confidentiality, AEs may need to make minor edits on a peer reviewer's text. These could involve rephrasing references to a reviewer's own work or deleting mention of areas of expertise or a specific institution with which the reviewer is associated. Reviewers are not always aware they are divulging their identity, and it is the AE's responsibility to read reviews carefully with confidentiality in mind. However, AEs should take great care to ensure that their edits do not threaten the integrity of the reviewer's comments. When in doubt, it is best to send a marked-up document to the reviewer for review prior to distribution.

Even though anonymity is maintained throughout the review process, presses will often approach reviewers at later stages to request permission to use quotations from the reviews in promotional copy or to include mention of a reviewer in a book's acknowledgments. At many presses, the AEs make these requests as the original contact with the reviewer.

### ***How many reports should be solicited and in what order?***

Generally, AEs seek two simultaneous reviews of manuscripts they wish to pursue. Interdisciplinary works may benefit from additional readings to represent the full

range of expertise in the project itself and to gauge the potential readership across different fields. Textbooks, reference works, and translations may benefit from more than two reviewers for analogous reasons.

But when the AE is uncertain about a project or about press acceptance of a project contingent upon the response from a particular readership, he or she may start with one review and follow it with a second only if the first is favorable. The evaluation of the first reviewer can also assist the author with plans for revision prior to the commissioning of a second review. This process adds time to the publication schedule but conserves AE and press resources.

An additional review may also be beneficial in cases in which the peer reviewers provide widely varying assessments of a manuscript. But it is also important for an AE to be able to advocate for a worthy project, even if it receives an equivocal or even negative review: path breaking scholarship is often controversial, and the AE has a vital responsibility to articulate how each project fits the mission and aims of his or her list.

### ***How many times does a manuscript need to be reviewed?***

Some completed manuscripts also undergo several rounds of review. On occasion, particularly with revised dissertations and first books, a peer-reviewed full manuscript is put under contract with the stipulation that the work will be reviewed again after extensive revision—either by one of the original reviewers or by a third independent reviewer, depending on the AE's or the faculty board's preference and reviewer availability.

## Section 2. Selecting Peer Reviewers

### *Who is qualified to write peer reviews?*

With the goal of soliciting feedback to help craft excellent books, AEs should choose reviewers for their expertise in the subject matter of each individual publishing project. Peer reviewers are most often established scholars with relevant expertise. Scholars who have already published at least one scholarly book (or have a book forthcoming) are preferred, although an extensive record of journal publications on relevant topics is acceptable. Some presses prefer tenured faculty; however, with decreasing numbers of scholars (including experienced ones) on the tenure track, this requirement may be difficult to meet. It is also important to note that in some emerging disciplines or areas of study, the thought leaders are often still junior faculty. When reviewing a project intended for course adoption, extensive teaching experience at the level of the book's intended audience may trump publication record or tenure. Journalists, civil servants and elected officials, professional writers, and artists outside the academy with relevant experience can also be used as peer reviewers in certain circumstances. The AE should be ready to speak to a particular reader's expertise as needed to the faculty board, author, or press colleagues.

The criteria outlined above represent the primary concerns of an AE in selecting appropriate peer reviewers. Best practice would also include soliciting feedback from readers who might help promote the book later or adopt it for courses or who might themselves be potential press authors. (See *Confidentiality and anonymity in the peer review process* above.) The peer review process plays a critical role in building an AE's advisory and author network. However, the reviewer's relevant subject expertise is paramount.

***Where do AEs find appropriate peer reviewers? Are suggestions from authors acceptable?***

A vital part of the AE's role is to develop a robust network of advisors. (See *Who is qualified to write peer reviews?* above.) The AE's reviewer selection process may be informed by, but should be independent of, suggestions from the author herself. An author's suggestions may alert AEs to other experts in the field or signal an author's conception of his ideal reader. If authors ask that some scholars not be asked to review the manuscript because of intellectual differences, the AE may wish to abide by the request but is not obligated to do so. The author's list of potential reviewers or veto of others can reveal conceptual or disciplinary boundaries of the author's work, highlight conflicts of interest the AE is not aware of, or flag reviewer directions that might be problematic. (See *What should an AE do about an obviously incompetent, biased, or ad hominem report?* below.)

Similarly, suggestions from trusted advisors, such as other press authors in the field, faculty board members, and series editors can be helpful. Still, a degree of independence and evaluation by the AE is crucial. Other authors can have their own priorities and biases and, although these are rarely consciously manipulative, they can have a disproportionate influence on the verdict emerging through peer review.

***If a project is intended for a series, can or should the series editor (or one of the series editors) act as a peer reviewer?***

AEs should be attentive to the possible tension between the role of series editors as champions of work cultivated for their series and their role as potential peer reviewers. The simplest way to avoid this tension is to commission at least two peer reviewers and to ask the series editor to offer an assessment of the reviews along with summary comments on a project's potential fit with the series. In cases where there are multiple series editors or a series editorial board, a core of expertise in the field is already gathered and so peer review by one of the series editors is acceptable. But such a review ought to be balanced by at least one review from a respected scholar who is not a member of the series board.



In cases where a series has a single editor, the series editor's review may be the deciding factor when outside reviewers do not agree on a project's merits. Otherwise, a series editor's role ideally is to commission, vet, and possibly help develop projects. The series editor can comment on a project via a letter of endorsement, which will have a different status in the faculty board's approval process than a full, independent peer review.

***What constitutes a conflict of interest that would prevent someone from acting as peer reviewer?***

Obviously, AEs should steer clear of relatives, existing or previous connections by marriage or serious relationship, and an author's dissertation advisor. Best practice also dictates avoiding reports from colleagues at the same institution, members of the author's dissertation committee, members of the author's graduate student cohort, and close friends or collaborators. There are myriad gray areas that may require further discussion: the enlistment of former or preexisting collaborators, such as volume coeditors or paper coauthors, for example, should be weighed carefully. Best practice is to err on the side of avoiding perceived conflicts. In certain circumstances exceptions may be made in consultation with the AE's supervisor.

## Section 3. Working with Peer Reviewers

### *Guidelines for reviewers*

Presses often provide reviewers a short list of questions to guide their evaluation of a project in order to improve the chances that the review will address the points most pertinent to a press's publication decision. This list should ask reviewers to focus on key areas such as the quality of argument, evidence, and writing in the context of subject-specific and manuscript-specific issues. Just as different reader criteria are brought to different projects, so too is it useful to have a range of reviewer questions tailored to particular kinds of projects, such as scholarly monographs, course books, trade nonfiction, fiction, or poetry. (See *Do different types of books require different types of peer reviews?* above.) The list may end by asking reviewers to recommend whether a project should be (1) rejected, (2) revised and resubmitted, or (3) accepted for publication. Although very important, such opinions should not outweigh the AE's own judgment of the manuscript's potential and his or her assessment of the reviews. It is not uncommon for two reviews to offer similar feedback and yet make different recommendations about publication.

AEs should explain to reviewers, either in the initial query or when sending the materials provided for the review process, that their reports will be confidential and their identities concealed from the author. The query or the review guidelines should specify who will see the reports (AEs and their assistants, the author, faculty board members) and who will know the reviewers' identities (AEs and their assistants, other press staff, faculty board members). (See *Confidentiality and anonymity in the peer review process* above.)

### *How should readers be remunerated for reports?*

Presses generally offer readers an honorarium in return for their evaluations of projects. That the compensation is an honorarium, not a fee, is important. First, using the term "honorarium" highlights the fact that peer review is a responsibility

academics bear as members of the scholarly community. Second, the term points to the fact that a press is not buying an expert opinion in the way that, say, a defense attorney may pay an expert to offer a particular reading of evidence. A peer reviewer is expected to provide an unbiased, candid, well-supported evaluation of a project's merits.

An honorarium generally takes one of two forms. A reviewer may be offered a cash payment or a selection of books from a press's catalog up to a certain dollar amount (usually larger than the amount of the cash payment, as the unit cost of books is significantly lower for publishers than for retail buyers). Some presses offer a combination of cash and books. AEs should tell a potential reader what the honorarium is in their initial queries, before the review begins. If certain categories of books are ineligible for selection, such as distributed books from other publishers, this should be noted on the honorarium form.

Honoraria amounts vary widely by presses, and AEs should be familiar with their own press's conventions. The amounts should reflect the scope of the work the reviewer is being asked to do; honoraria are typically larger for full manuscripts than for proposals. In addition, asking a peer reviewer to evaluate a particularly long manuscript or to provide a report in an unusually short amount of time often warrants increasing the amount of an honorarium. (See *What is a reasonable amount of time to allow a peer reviewer to read and report on a project?* below.) Honoraria are paid on receipt of reports. Also, if the press ultimately publishes the work in question, the reviewer should receive a gratis copy.

### ***What is a reasonable amount of time to allow a peer reviewer to read and report on a project?***

While it is generally in both an author's and a press's interests to receive reports as quickly as possible, AEs should be aware that properly reviewing a manuscript is both time- and labor-intensive. It is customary to give peer reviewers at least six to eight weeks to review a full manuscript and three to four weeks to review a proposal, though in competitive situations an AE may request a faster turnaround. It may also

be necessary to allow more time for particularly long or complex projects. AEs and reviewers should agree on a deadline before the process starts, and it is generally recommended that an AE or assistant check in with reviewers as the deadline approaches. AEs or their assistants should track due dates for reviews in some kind of database—an essential tool, given the volume of projects an AE may have out for review at any given time.

***What should an AE do when a peer reviewer fails to produce a report within an acceptable period of time? Can compensation be withheld in such cases?***

Given the time it can take to secure appropriate readers for a project, AEs should accommodate modest delays (one to two weeks). However, a reviewer who misses an initial deadline is likely to miss another one, and AEs should exercise caution in granting longer extensions (a month or more). If a second deadline passes without a review, the AE should take steps to line up an additional reader rather than risk longer delays for the author. A new reader should also be found if a reader does not respond to follow-up queries. In such cases, the AE should notify the original reader that the press no longer expects a report and will not compensate him or her. There is always the possibility, however, that a late review will surface, and an AE will need to decide whether to provide the normal honorarium in such cases.

As challenging as the lack of review can be, AEs also face situations in which a review is unsatisfactory: either it fails to address the questions posed, it does so without sufficient detail, or its assessment is unclear. AEs should first try to encourage the reviewer to flesh out the report, but if a full review does not materialize, the honorarium may be prorated. Similarly, if a reviewer fails to submit a review, the press is not obliged to pay the honorarium. If, however, the press decides it no longer needs a commissioned report (for example, if a project is lost to another press in competition), the reviewer should still be offered the honorarium, even if the report has not yet arrived.

***What should an AE do about an obviously incompetent, biased, or ad hominem report? Can a commissioned report be disregarded? What is the best way to communicate such concerns to a peer reviewer?***

Peer review is meant to provide an honest and rigorous assessment of the merits of a project, and archetypical reports can be as much an art form as the manuscripts under consideration. The ideal report offers sound advice for helping a project realize its fullest potential. It is the AE's responsibility, in turn, to assess the reviews to ensure that reviewers have met expectations. Reports that do not engage with the content of a work, that offer insufficient support for a reviewer's criticisms, or that evince animus toward authors or their ideas do not provide useful guidance to AEs, authors, or faculty boards.

Upon receipt of an opaque or problematic review, the AE should request amplification or clarification for the sake of the author and the press. Specificity is important in such situations. The ultimate goal is to secure a suitable review, and so giving the reviewer an opportunity to revisit the report is in most cases worthwhile. On the other hand, if a report is flawed because the reader is clearly biased against an author or his approach to a subject, there is little to be gained in returning to that reviewer. The decision to address flawed reviews directly can be a vexed one for AEs, who should discuss such reports with their supervisors before proceeding.

If the report is biased against the author's approach, the AE should consider it in the context of the scholarly discipline in question. If the field is deeply divided and the author and reviewer are on opposing sides of that divide, then the review may help the author anticipate and address criticisms. Ideally, the AE will be aware of such disciplinary politics and will take them into consideration in selecting peer reviewers. If the bias is against the author personally, the review should be disregarded because it does not assess the manuscript itself. For the sake of expediency, it is often best to extend the usual courtesy to such a reviewer and process his or her honorarium, even if the report is disregarded.

The AE need not share an unfairly prejudiced or hostile report with an author; instead, the AE should seek an alternate peer reviewer. Presses differ in whether they

include biased reports in packets for the faculty board. If such a report is included, the AE's statement should take care to contextualize the review and its criticisms and explain that it has not been shared with the author.

***If a report is delayed or otherwise unacceptable, what should the AE say to the author? Should the author be told the reviewer is at fault, or is it best to simply cite unavoidable delays?***

In general, transparency in the author-editor relationship is paramount, and the AE should tell the author about any delays in the review process promptly. However, AEs need not always reveal the source of the delay. In deciding whether to inform an author that a delay is due to a reviewer's tardiness, the AE should avoid giving the impression that the report is hastily or haphazardly prepared. Peer reviews need to carry authority with an author because they form, at least in part, the basis of a press's judgment about whether to accept or reject a project. If a reviewer submits a well-constructed but delayed review, its tardiness should not undermine its force. If a reader fails to submit a review, an AE should alert the author of the reader's unresponsiveness, though ultimately it is the role of an AE to manage the peer review process as efficiently as possible.

***What if a reviewer jeopardizes a project by revealing his or her role to others in the field?***

In spite of the press's best intentions in assuring the confidentiality of peer reviews (see *Confidentiality and anonymity in the peer review process* above), in some cases a reviewer may discuss the project with interested parties other than the author. This discussion may jeopardize a book that is, for example, based on confidential interviews or takes a stand on a controversial issue. In such cases, AEs must weigh the likely impact of the revelation in deciding whether to disregard the report. Will public knowledge of the reviewer's identity undermine the legitimacy of the report with the author or other scholars in the field? Has the revelation reshaped the readership for the

work or its public reception? Does it potentially poison the author's relationship with the subjects of his or her research or employer? Where the revelation has had a significant impact on the likely success of the work, the press may need to reconsider its decision to publish it.

## Section 4. Sharing Peer Reviews with Authors

### *How should an AE handle split or negative reviews?*

Reviews don't always lead to a clear positive or negative decision. If peer reviewers' views diverge and a third party, such as a series editor, isn't available to assess and advise on the difference of opinion (see *If a project is intended for a series, can or should the series editor (or one of the series editors) act as a peer reviewer?* above), a useful first step is for the AE to discuss the reports with the author or request a preliminary written response to the reviews to see how an author assimilates and addresses the feedback. A commanding author response can make a very compelling case to pursue a project further, even in the face of strong criticism. The AE may solicit another review; invite the author to revise and resubmit and then send the project out to be reviewed again; or, in some circumstances, proceed to the faculty board for final approval on the strength of the one supportive review and the author's thoughtful and thorough response. The last option is most likely when a series editor or a faculty board member can also be called upon to weigh in on or contextualize the reviews as well as to offer their view of the project's merits.

If both reviews are overtly negative but the AE feels the project is still viable, he or she may craft a plan with the author for revisions that would enable further consideration. However, the AE should be very clear with the author about the time frame and the likelihood of eventual publication.

### *Is a formal response from the author to the reviews necessary in every case? If not, what are the exceptions?*

With some exceptions, a formal response from the author should be solicited before a project is taken to the faculty board for approval. Occasional exceptions include cases where the reports are strong, the project is competitive, and the press must move quickly.



***How much help should an AE offer in guiding an author's response to readers' reports?***

The author, ultimately, is responsible for his or her response, but most authors benefit from the AE's guidance in the content and tenor of the response. The AE should help the author write a response that offers a strategy for revision and addresses the reviewers' criticisms in a productive fashion. The AE should highlight the sections in the peer reviews that need to be addressed and that will likely be of most concern to the press and the faculty board.

***When is it appropriate for the AE's vision for a project to take precedence over reviewers' suggestions about desirable revisions?***

Sometimes the press and author's vision of a work does not align with that of reviewers. For example, a more scholarly reviewer may recommend expanding the reference or scholarly apparatus of a trade book. Or a reviewer might argue for a topic that is beyond the scope of the project to be covered. In such instances, the path forward should involve discussions between the AE and author, who ultimately will need to agree on an ideal structure for the work informed by the press's expectations. We recommend letting reviewers know if their advice is not followed to avoid concerns raised on receipt of the published book.

If the author does not agree with elements of a review, he or she needs to be prepared to make a compelling case for his or her preferred approach. AEs should pay careful attention to the way in which authors frame their decision not to heed some of the reviewers' suggestions.

***What is the best course of action if an author refuses to write a formal response to peer reviews or writes something obviously inadequate?***

It is rare for an author who is serious about publishing a book with a university press to refuse the opportunity to respond to peer reviews. If an author does refuse, the

AE should reassess his or her working relationship with the author and may even decline publication on these grounds. If the response is inadequate but the AE is still interested in the book, he or she should work with the author to improve the response.

## Section 5. Peer Reviews as Documents of Record

*Besides the AE, author, and press staff, who is permitted to see anonymous peer reviews?*

The review process for proposals and manuscripts is intended to be entirely distinct from any professional review authors may be undergoing. For this reason AEs are strongly discouraged from sharing materials with authors' hiring, tenure, and promotion committees. Peer reviewers are not being asked to comment on an author's professional experiences beyond what is conveyed in the proposal or manuscript itself, so repurposing reader reports for any professional situation beyond the publishing world constitutes misuse. Of course, the outcome of a university press's peer review and publication process will often have considerable impact on the author's professional evaluations, but it is critical that the intentions of the manuscript review process be maintained separate from any other evaluative process.

If members of a hiring or tenure and promotion committee request copies of the reviews, the AE should refuse to provide them and should contact the author to tell him or her to communicate with the committee about the issue directly. However, an AE may choose to inform hiring or tenure and promotion committees about the project's current status: out for review, under contract, or in press.

*Do members of a press faculty editorial board know the identity of all peer reviewers? If there are exceptions, what are they?*

As the charge of university press faculty boards is to assess the integrity of the review process, it is essential that the identity of the peer reviewers be shared with board members. However, even at this stage, it is important that the promise of reviewer anonymity be incorporated into the preparation of board materials. All of these materials are confidential, and everyone involved in compiling and reviewing

them should be aware of this. Many presses circulate separate reviewer identities with their board materials so as to avoid including peer reviewer identities in the dockets themselves. (See *Confidentiality and anonymity in the peer review process* above.)

***If peer reviews include endorsements that could be used as blurbs in marketing materials, what is the best way to request this kind of use from peer reviewers?***

Many presses harvest blurbs from reviewers' reports. Because peer reviewers have been promised anonymity, this process cannot be automated. If a press wishes to extract comments from a report, it is essential that press staff request the reviewer's permission and offer him or her the opportunity to refine or edit the quoted material. Some reviewers may wish to see the revised manuscript before authorizing use of their words in marketing materials.

***Can reports be shared with other presses if an AE decides not to pursue a project?***

Every AE will experience a situation in which the peer review process does not lead to a contract, faculty board approval, or even board presentation. In some cases, in order to help an author find a viable publishing alternative, AEs may want to share reports with AEs at other houses to help expedite the decision-making process. The reviews should only be requested by and given to another AE; this exchange should not occur through the author. In any such situation, the AE at the original press should contact the reviewers, explain the circumstances, and ask for their permission. If a reviewer does not wish his review to be shared, the AE should not pass it along to the other press.

### ***What about long-term storage of reports and the identity of reviewers?***

Reader reports, both digital and print forms, become part of any press's archival holdings. The utility of reader reports following book publication usually decreases, though the comments may come to have historical value. For practical purposes, it may not be possible to protect reviewers' anonymity in perpetuity. Many presses have opted to adhere to their parent institution's embargo protocols on tenure and promotion review files. These often set the duration of reader protection for periods of fifty years post review, or this time period may be benchmarked by the timing of the decision on whether or not to publish. Those presses that archive their book files with their institutional libraries or repositories should actively consult with collections managers to be certain that, as materials are digitized, issues of anonymity are discussed and protocols agreed upon.

### ***What if lawyers or other parties external to the university ask to see the reviews?***

As noted above (see *Besides the AE, author, and press staff, who is permitted to see anonymous peer reviews?*), presses should refuse outside requests to see reviews. In some cases, however, public records laws may trump press policy, in cases, for example, where an author is a civil servant or a press is part of a state university. When legal issues arise, presses should consult with university counsel before responding to such requests.



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