

EDITORIAL – From the Faculty Editor

I am extremely pleased to see another edition of the iCHANNEL published. Congratulations to Joyce Li, Mame Frimpong, and Marta Stelmaszak as associate editors who have done an amazing job this year. I would also like to congratulate the article authors who should be extremely proud to have a publication for their CVs. Finally, I would like to thank the reviewers who work so hard to improve the quality of the articles. Reviewers are often the unsung heroes of an academic journal. Unrecognised and unrewarded (apart from perhaps their name in small print in the cover) they must undertake considerable work if quality articles are to be published.

Academic publishing is founded upon the idea of double-blind peer review. Double-blind refers to neither author or reviewers knowing the names of the other side. Peer review refers to both author and reviewer being peers and thus somewhat equal in the evaluation. On this basis, a reviewer is not an expert “judging” the article, but a peer providing an honest assessment of its strength and weaknesses. Personally, when reviewing, I like to write as though it were not anonymous – so while the author might not like my review I seek to justify all my points so they can understand and appreciate my concerns. Above all, while peer review is an instrument of quality control and a judgement on the quality of the article, reviews must first and foremost be constructive and helpful. Reviews should aim to improve the quality of the article whatever the decision recommended to the editor (who ultimately make the decision alone). Good reviews carefully explain how the article might be improved, often starting with an overall evaluation, then working through the article section by section. Recommendations can be made, but reviewers should not demand that they be followed – they are only peers of the author after all. Reviewers can suggest alternative literature (perhaps missing) and provide examples of new ideas which might be included. Reviews should be prepared to critique hyperbole and unfounded assertions. They should also seek to point out mistakes and misunderstandings.

Alan Lee provides some very useful advice on reviewing (<http://www.people.vcu.edu/~aslee/referee.htm>) which I would urge our reviewers to consult. After all reviewing others’ work carefully and tactfully is all a vital skill in professional life and worthy of learning well.

Finally, our reviewers should feel proud to see a paper that they reviewed published. In undertaking a detailed, constructive and helpful review they should see some of their own work in the final publication. And if the article is ultimately rejected by the editors they should be proud that they have provided the authors with useful lessons with which to improve their future work.

Dr. Will Venters

Faculty Editor