EDITORIAL – From the Faculty Editor

This year has been dominated by the COVID and the changes it has wrought on the LSE. Yet the editorial team has produced the journal without help and with exceptional professionalism. For this they must be hugely congratulated. They now join the incredible multitude of iSChannel alumni from these past 15 years who have benefited so much for this journal!

This year I wanted to talk a little about reviewing for the iSChannel. Reviewers are, in some ways, the unsung heroes of any journal. While it might feel like a burden, reviewing is a wonderful chance to be forced to critically examine someone's writing and to make a recommendation. For MISDI and PhD students it gives a chance to experience what an examiner experiences judging their own work, and to learn the pitfalls we all make in our writing.

It is not the reviewers job to "decide" whether an article is "good"(accept) or "bad"(reject) – they can only make recommendations. Editors always decide. They act as peer-reviewers to the writer, examining and assessing, as equals, the argument and seeking to provide supportive advice which can develop the work. Reviewers engage with improving articles more than judging them – and in many ways they become co-authors of the articles they review. The following list provides a checklist for iSChannel reviews which may be helpful in the future.

• Provide a brief summary of the article – what kind of article is it? What issue does it seek to address?

• Discuss the overall validity of the argument made – does it hold together well? Is it convincing?

• Provide a polite overall judgement briefly setting out strengths and weaknesses as you see them. Acknowledge where you are unsure and that you only recommend editors make a decision. Write "I think" rather than "it is". Make your recommendation (Reject, Major Revision, Minor-Revisions, Accept-as-is).

• Carefully discuss each section of the article and provide suggestions for improvements for each part.

• End with a positive comment about the work.

• List minor points or correction which you noted (e.g. spelling errors, referencing errors…) but which should not affect your recommendation.

Reviews must be polite and never rude. Writers have worked hard on their articles and submitted their best work. It is disheartening to receive rejection but it is made worse when the reviews do not politely and clearly explain the failings or make any suggestions for improvement. Reviewers must also act ethically – if a reviewer feels in any way biased towards an article they should speak with the editor.

Reviewers should be proud of their important role. They can put reviewing on their CVs. Editors should also provide reviewers with feedback on their reviews (one sentence or so) that can be used on the CV. I therefore would like to particularly thank those who reviewed this year: Martin Lamby, Miriam Trocha, Nicola Ringele, Patrick Kohler-Aranibar, Yiduo Wang

I want to end with a word of thanks. This year's editorial team – Barbara Nitschke, Christian Poeschl, Keisuke Idemitsu, Konstantin Mangels, Maximilian Goehmann, Yue (Emma) Feng have been amazing and worked exceptionally well to deliver this journal. I would also particularly like to thank Jiao (Joanna) Peng who, as senior editor, has been instrumental in professionally delivering the iSChannel's 15th anniversary edition despite the challenges and in leading the team. Together the whole team delivered it earlier than usual to allow a longer printing and delivery time. Well done!

I very much look forward to the next 15 years of this amazing journal.

Will Venters

Faculty Editor