

“PEERE International Conference on peer review 2018” highlighted robust methodologies and transparent reporting about the peer review process over the years 2014-2018

March 7-9, 2018, Rome, Italy

The discussion on how to improve the integrity of the evidence-base of science is a long-standing one. Since 2014, the New Frontiers of Peer Review (PEERE) – a European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) action – has held meetings and conferences that have gathered scientists from diverse fields who bring issues affecting the quality of the dissemination of science to the attention of decision-makers. Editors, researchers, clinicians, librarians, educators, and many other allies in multi-disciplinary sciences focus on maintaining the integrity of research through: clearly defined roles and regulations, transparent reporting of data, and gatekeeping by editors and peer reviewers to mitigate biases in the literature.

Flaminio Squazzoni, the action’s chair, delivered the opening talk concerning the past achievements and future perspectives of PEERE. During the three-day conference, there were 45 oral presentations (www.peere.org/dissemination/presentations/) and 9 poster presentations. Presenters had a forum to underscore the need for improved practices and policies in data sharing, for quality control, and for research into peer review. Talks involved, among other topics, the assessments of the peer review of research grant proposals, the network analyses of peer review, the guidelines for reviewers, and the methods to improve peer review policies at the journal level. Peter Van Den Besselaar further extended the evidence on gender bias in the peer review process. Other speakers presented ways to rank and incentivize reviewers for journals, as past studies have demonstrated the burden of the peer review process on reviewers.

Based on the scientific merit of submissions, the audience awarded the prizes for the best poster and the best full-length paper. The first one, a book voucher for 150 euros kindly offered by Wiley, went to Luca Longo (University College Dublin), Olgica Nedic and Aleksandar Dekanski (University of Belgrade) for the poster entitled “How mental workload affects the peer-review task”. The second one, a book voucher for 250 euros kindly offered by Springer Nature, went to Peter Van Den Besselaar (Vrije University Amsterdam), Ulf Sandstrom (KTH Royal Institute of Technology), and Helene Schiffbaenker (Joanneum Research) for the paper entitled

“Using linguistic analysis of peer review reports to study panel processes”.

The conference dinner was held at the bottom of the Quirinal Hill in the luxurious Colonna Palace. The palace, owned by the prestigious Colonna family for over twenty generations, was partially built on the ruins of an old Roman temple. It is commonly believed that the building hosted Dante during his visit to Rome!

Reviewers, editors, authors, journal administrators, and librarians discussed the problems concerning the integrity of peer review and provided empirical evidence on how to best address them directly; with the perspective well beyond the end of PEERE as a COST action. PEERE unwrapped the multiple layers of the peer review process through the transparent dissemination of evidence about peer review.

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Conference dinner at the Palazzo Colonna
Photo courtesy of Aleksandar Dekanski



Presenters at the PEERE Conference on peer review 2018. Photo courtesy of Aleksandar Dekanski.