

Discussion Topic: Quote from COE**Introduction**

I agree to immediately inform any Criteria compliant Applicant in writing, of a 'Refrain to Evaluate' if it is found that a Conflict of Interest would occur in evaluating their Web site - e.g. Such may occur upon being requested to evaluate the Web site of a good friend. I will offer such Applicant a choice of Evaluator taken from our Membership Listing.

Discussion:

In conventional publishing, editors and reviewers are selected for their expertise, and trust is gained through reviewers authority. While website reviews by the various rated award programs are mainly hobbyists, consistency and objectivity are touchstones for an award program evaluation which test ethical standards and enlist trust and authority.

The collective activities of those who review web sites in a stated set of criteria or evaluation requisites or disciplines serve to set the standards of that field. This body of unpaid, and often unidentified, volunteers offers a collective opinion on the expected standards of review rigor for the individual award program owners and those who administer award program rating groups. Their opinions on such matters as which techniques are current, valid and appropriate; how data should be analyzed and presented; and how rigorous authors must be or how individualistic they can be in the their web sites become de facto standards of the field. In addition, their critiques set subtler standards of collegiality, behavior, and ethics - not only through their recommendations concerning which web sites should be honored with an award and which should be rejected, but also through the tone and wording of their reviews and through the thought that they give to their objectivity and ethical responsibilities as reviewers.

Sometimes a potential reviewer is presented with a very awkward problem when he/she is asked to review a web site that is very close to his/her own work. The potential reviewer should not review this web site: doing so presents a no-win situation even if the reviewer acts with the utmost integrity. The ethical standards, rules, and regulations concerning conflicts of interest are evolving and changing. Different award rating groups and different membership organizations have markedly different standards for determining when a conflict of interest has reached the level of significance where it presents a problem. The reviewer therefore will not have the comfort of having definitive, universal guidelines that provide clear yes or no answers.

Other institutional affiliations may create more subtle conflicts of interest. Beyond this there is a gray area, where you will need to assess whether you can be objective and can be perceived as objective. A strongly held personal belief or a vocal public position in an open forum or in private correspondence could raise problems if it compromises or appears to compromise the objectivity of a review.

Theoretical relationships among effectiveness, efficiency, and quality, the three outcome variables or criteria by which (according to the theory) persuasive effects are judged. Communication appropriately combines the rhetorical with the instrumental by creating knowledge during an exchange, which may be "instrumental" in effecting web publishing outcomes.¹

Moreover, the recommendations the reviewers make concerning web site awards and the advice they give to award program owners set the objective standards of the discipline. In addition, their critiques set subtler standards of collegiality, behavior, and ethics, not only through their recommendations concerning which web sites should be honored and which should be rejected, but also through the tone and wording of their reviews and through the thought that they give to their objectivity and ethical responsibilities as reviewers. The review of web publications for peer reviewed award program indexing groups or individual award programs raises many ethical issues and problems. The reviewer should be aware of these when deciding whether to review a specific web site, throughout the process of handling the review and writing the review, and even after the review is completed and submitted.

From an award program owner or award program rating groups point of view the ideal reviewer is an individual who is versed in the same subject of the web site yet is not in direct competition with the authors. The ideal reviewer will understand the hypotheses underlying the work and will be familiar with the model systems and methods used in the project. He or she will be able to judge the quality of the on line material and the analyses and assess the validity of the conclusions. The ideal reviewer will be able to assess the significance of the work in relation to previous award winners.

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