



EDITORIAL

Something is happening in the world of academic publishing – something quite serious and revolutionary. It seems a critical mass of academic peer reviewers around the globe a beginning to ask questions no one dared ask before, either for fear of being treated with cynicism or being a lone voice. So, reviewers are now asking a very simple but table-shaking question – “why do we get to review articles free while the publisher pockets the whole sum of money charged for processing and publishing”? They are also asking a follow-up question – “why do we still have to pay to publish in the same journals we offer free review services to”? To make this more explicit, one might ask “why charge an author \$1,500 to publish an article which were reviewed by persons who did not get paid for the job they did for the journal”? A colleague of mine sat in my office a few days ago and vowed in exasperation not to review for any journal free of charge ever again! Researchers in developing countries are usually at the receiving end of this seeming unfair and lop-sided business model. Take a researcher from Nigeria for instance, whose annual income is less than \$2,000. He is often bombarded with review requests from journals that rake in hundreds of millions of Dollars from authors and yet he gets *nothing* for reviewing these papers. At best, some journals will offer free access to their archive or a \$100 coupon which usually expires before the individual gets to redeem it. In a bid to address the growing discontent among academic peer reviewers, Publon was launched by Andrew Preston and Daniel Johnston in 2012 in order to accord recognition to researchers for peer review activities. However, it has become obvious that in a capitalist age where one should earn money for every service, including uploading hollow contents on YouTube, researchers too deserve more than mere static recognition on Publon or a few weeks’ access to journal archives they don’t bother to visit. Reviewer Credits is the new guy in town born in 2016 who is trying to untangle the reviewer-publisher knot. They admit that peer review is a tedious process which should earn the reviewer substantial benefits such as coupons redeemable against author publishing services, certificate of peer review recognition and a peer review profile. Though these offers are a few grades higher than what Publon offers, all of these still seem to be domiciled in the realm of recognition. It actually sounds narcissist that an industry worth over 28 billion Dollars would “extort” free services from persons who would rather have some monetary value for their service than an illusory recognition which hardly confers any

advantage on the recipient. Hence, I am going to re-phrase the two introductory questions and synthesize them into one focal question which is “why is it that publishers are not willing to pay an academic reviewer despite charging the author and subscribers a substantial amount of money”? We shall explore the answers to this poser next time, but that this question should ever arise clearly indicates that the current system is overdue for review. We at the Nigerian Journal of Technology are fully aware of the indispensable role of peer reviewers in academic publishing. Hence, we have devised a reward system that entitles reviewers to mobile phone airtime per review or 20% discount on their next publication if they successfully review four papers with an average rating of 4/5. This is our little way of saying that we deeply appreciate the excellent work being done by our reviewers.

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