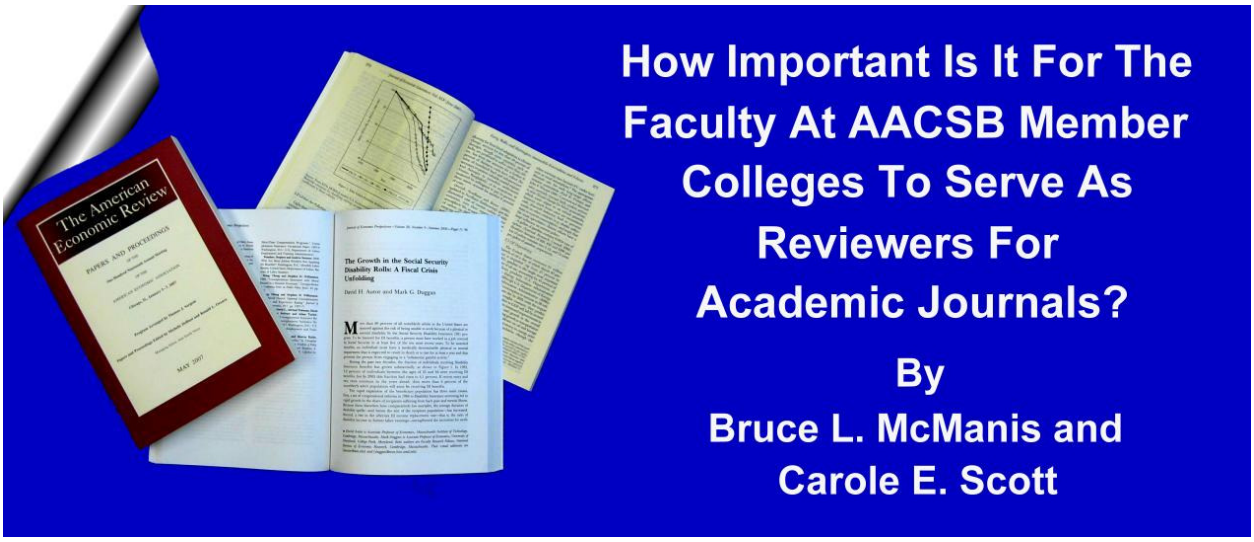

Peer Reviewed

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Abstract

Reported in this paper are the results of a survey of deans of AACSB-accredited institutions to determine the amount of credit given a faculty member for serving as a reviewer for an academic journal when he or she is being considered for promotion or being granted tenure. This survey is probably the first of this type to ever be conducted. Concluded is that this activity is not valued very highly.

Introduction

Clearly, academicians in every discipline realize that peer review of the papers published in academic journals is important. A physicist writes that, “The peer review system, although criticized by some…as somewhat biased against unorthodox ideas, is essential to weed out the charlatans, the misguided, and the fools. Peer review must be preserved if not strengthened. However, more papers published means that, on average, each researcher receives more requests for refereeing. The good referees are inundated with more papers to review than they can possibly handle.” (Gad-el-Hak)

Even many of those outside academe have heard about professors being subject to “perishing” if they do not publish. There is no question but that in academe papers will be valued much higher if they are peer reviewed. However, textbooks appear to be an exception to this rule. Although they are peer reviewed, because they do not present new knowledge and earn their author(s) royalties, they apparently do comparatively little to burnish one’s academic credentials.

Supposedly, the time taken away from teaching in order to conduct the necessary research and write a publishable paper does students no harm because this activity pushes out the frontiers of knowledge and disseminates the newly discovered information for the benefit of students and society as a whole. Supposedly, it also places at the classroom lectern professors on the cutting-edge of their discipline even if they are long out of graduate school.

Because publications provide an objective way for any interested party to evaluate the quality of a university’s faculty, university administrators typically expect faculty members who want to assure that they keep their jobs and get promotions and significant pay increases to publish quality papers. The significant increase in the number of academic journals is likely--at least in part--to be a result of and an indicator of the amount of pressure to publish.

However, you don’t hear about how, if you want to get ahead in academe, you had better review papers for academic journals. Yet, unlike the chicken and the egg, it is certain what comes first. In order for a paper to be published as a peer reviewed article, there must be peer reviewers. It would seem to be preferable that many reviewers should be experienced researchers, rather than novice professors seeking to submit a more substantial annual report; learn more about publishing in academic journals; and making professional contacts.

To determine how much reward a faculty member at a school or college of business receives for serving as a reviewer for an academic journal, a questionnaire was emailed to 94 percent of the deans of AACSB-accredited schools of business to see how much weight is assigned to this activity in the decision to promote and tenure faculty. The greater the reward, presumably the more and better reviewers journals will be able to recruit. AACSB-accredited business schools were selected because of their long standing tradition of requiring broad faculty participation in peer reviewed publication. Although the standards no longer specifically require it, there is no indication that today accredited schools view it as being any less important than in the past.

Methodology

There are 551 colleges and schools of business accredited by the AACSB. Email addresses for the dean or director were obtained for 518 of them from their web pages. The other 33 either were in the middle of changing deans, and the new person

did not yet have an email address, or the web page did not provide an email address for its dean. The majority of the schools where an email address could not be found were located outside the United States. There were only three universities that have separate accounting accreditation that did not provide an email address for their dean.

An email was sent to each of the 518 deans that we had email addresses for. In it they were asked to complete a web based survey relating to how they included peer reviewing for journals in their annual evaluation of faculty for promotion and tenure purposes. The survey was available throughout the month of August 2007.

Response

A total of 167 responses were received. Therefore, there was a 32 percent response rate. Table 1 (below) shows a breakdown of the responses by several characteristics of the survey population.

TABLE 1
Response Demographics

	POPULATION	NO EMAIL	SAMPLE	RESPONSE	PERCENT
Accredited	551	33	518	167	32
Accounting	167	3	164	57	35
US	457	13	444	149	34
Non-US	94	20	74	18	24

Although there is a somewhat lower response rate from the non-US schools, on balance the sample seems to be very representative of the population.

Several questions were included in the survey to identify institutional characteristics that might be important indicators of how peer reviewing is used. They included where the business school is located (the U.S. or another country); whether a U.S. business school is public (government-supported) or private; the highest degree the business school awards, and the number of students majoring in business. Table 2 (below) reports this breakdown of respondents.

TABLE 2

Institutional Characteristics

Type of Institution		
	Frequency	Percent
Public	121	72.5
Private	46	27.5
Total	167	100
Highest Degree Awarded in Business		
	Frequency	Percent
B.S./B.A.	14	8.4
M.B.A.	78	46.7
Specialized Masters	24	14.4
Ph.D./D.B.A.	51	30.5
Total	167	100
Number of Majors		
	Frequency	Percent
< 500	11	6.6
500 - 999	34	20.4
1000 - 2499	68	40.7
2500 - 4999	38	22.8
> 5000	16	9.6
Total	167	100

Nothing in the institutional characteristics is surprising. The majority of the schools are publicly funded; offer a masters degree as their highest degree; and have an enrollment in the business school of between of 1,000 and 2,500 students.

Use in Annual Evaluations of Faculty

Although an good reviewer will be quite knowledgeable about the subject of a paper he or she is reviewing and should, when appropriate, offer informed and possibly extensive comments and suggestions, it was expected that being a reviewer would be classified as service, rather than an intellectual contribution, because that appears to be where it is commonly assigned; not only in schools of business, but in other disciplines as well.

At the University of South Carolina (http:www.sc.edu/tenure/electric.doc), for example, the Department of Electrical Engineering says the following about the professional service of its faculty members: "Organizing national or international symposia or workshops; serving as a member of boards or international or national symposia, an officer in professional societies, **referee or reviewer for funding agencies, professional journals, or text book publishers; and participating in editorial boards of journals or text books and grant review panels**" [emphasis added].

A business school professor who reviewed this paper says that at her university serving as a peer reviewer only earns a professor additional "good marks". No documentation is required, and the only reporting of reviewing activity is the inclusion on a faculty member's vita that he or she served as a reviewer for a specific journal.

In describing its principles for awarding tenure and promotion, Emory University's Goizueta Business School says: "Community service activities represent the outreach programs and activities of the School and its faculty. Emphasis is placed upon organized educational activities where knowledge and teaching are combined, but programs and activities of a professional nature should not be limited to those that are purely education-oriented. These activities, which contribute to the growth of the faculty member, may include the enhancement of a professional discipline, service to an outside agency, teaching in programs sponsored by other educational and business organizations, membership on research or scholarship evaluation teams, **membership on publication review boards** [emphasis added], committee membership or the holding of office in professional societies, or advising extra-university groups in matters of professional expertise. (Office of the Provost)

The business school deans surveyed were asked two questions about their use of peer reviewing in their annual evaluation of faculty. The responsibilities of faculty are generally considered to include teaching, intellectual contributions, and service. Since peer reviewing is definitely not teaching, schools were asked to indicate if they considered it an intellectual contribution, service, or didn't consider it in the evaluation process. Because four schools considered it to be a part of some other type of activity, and there was no consistency in how they defined it, they were omitted in Table 3 (below) which reports their responses.

TABLE 3
Type of Activity

	Frequency	Percent
Intellectual Contribution	36	21.6
Service	121	72.5
Not Considered	6	3.6
Total	163	97.6

Also considered was whether or not any of the institutional characteristics had an impact on how peer reviewing is evaluated. To achieve this, Chi-square tests were run on crosstabs for all of the institutional characteristics. Most showed no significant relationship, so detailed tables have been omitted. However, two characteristics did seem to have an impact on how peer reviewing was treated.

When "Type of Institution" (Table 2) was paired with "Type of Activity" (Table 3) a Chi-square of 8.9 was calculated that was significant at the .02 level. Table 4 (below) shows these results.

TABLE 4

Type of Institution and Type of Activity

		USE IN ANNUAL EVALUATIONS			
		Intellectual Contribution	Service	Not Considered	Total
Type of Institution	Private	16	26	3	45
	Percent	35.6	57.8	6.7	
	Public	20	95	3	118
	Percent	16.9	80.5	2.5	
	Total	36	121	6	163
	Percent	22.1	74.2	3.7	

Private institutions were noticeably more inclined to treat peer reviewing as an intellectual contribution than public institutions were. Even private institutions only slightly more than one third of them considered it an intellectual contribution, while more than half considered it service. (Whether a university is public or private was known only in the case of those located in the U.S.)

Additionally, as is shown in Table 5 (below), non-US institutions were also more inclined to treat it as an intellectual contribution than were their peers in the U.S. Here the Chi-square value is 7.2, which is significant at the .03 level.

TABLE 5

Location and Type of Activity

		Use in Annual Evaluations			
		Intellectual Contribution	Service	Not Considered	Total
Location of Institution	U.S.	29	112	4	145
	Percent	20.0	77.2	2.8	
	Non-U.S.	7	9	2	18
	Percent	38.9	50.0	11.1	
	Total	36	121	6	163
	Percent	22.1	74.2	3.7	

Significance in Annual Evaluations

The second area of examined was the weight that is applied to peer reviewing in the evaluation process. The results are shown in Table 6 (below).

TABLE 6

Significance in Annual Evaluations

	Frequency	Percent
Very significant	2	1.2
Moderately significant	43	25.7
Minor significance	102	61.1
Trivial	18	10.8
Not considered	2	1.2
Total	167	100

Clearly, a significant majority of the schools did not put much weight on it. Crosstabs against the various school characteristics all proved to be non-significant.

Use in Promotion and Tenure Decisions

Respondents' responses about promotion and tenure decisions were pretty similar. Again, service was the category that reviewing is most often placed in, but there were noticeably more respondents who did not consider it at all. See Table 7 (below).

TABLE 7

Type of Activity

	Frequency	Percent
Intellectual Contribution	26	15.6
Service	118	70.7
Not Considered	18	10.8
Total	162	97

Again, the location of the institution had a significant impact on how peer reviewing is used. In looking at the percentages, the chief difference between U.S. and non-U.S. schools lies in the non-U.S. schools not considering it for these situations. The Chi Square for institution location versus type of activity was 10.5, which is significant at the .01 level. None of the other institution characteristics seemed to make a difference. This is shown in Table 8 (below).

TABLE 8

Location and Type of Activity in Promotion and Tenure Decisions

		Use in Promotion & Tenure Decisions			
		Intellectual Contribution	Service	Not Considered	Total
Location of Institution	U.S.	23	109	12	144
	Percent	16.0	75.7	8.3	
	Non-U.S.	3	9	6	18
	Percent	16.7	50.0	33.3	
	Total	26	118	18	162
	Percent	16.0	72.8	11.1	

Significance in Promotion and Tenure Decisions

As was the case with annual evaluations, peer reviewing is predominantly a minor consideration in promotion and tenure decisions. These results are reported in Table 9 (below).

TABLE 9

Significance in Promotion and Tenure Decisions

	Frequency	Percent
Very significant	1	0.6
Moderately significant	29	17.4
Minor significance	107	64.1
Trivial	25	15
Not considered	5	3
Total	167	100

Although most of the institutional characteristics showed no impact on the level of significance, again, the location of the institution was important. The Chi-square was 10.8, which is significant at the .03 level. Although six of the non-U.S. institutions did not consider it to be either a service or intellectual contribution activity, they all gave it some weight in promotion and tenure decisions. In general, the non-U.S. institutions placed more weight on peer reviewing than their U.S. counterparts. These results are displayed in Table 10 (below).

TABLE 10

Institution Location v Significance in Promotion and Tenure Decisions

		Significance in Promotion & Tenure Decisions					
		Very significant	Moderately significant	Minor significance	Trivial	Not considered	Total
Location of Institution	U.S.	0	24	98	22	5	149
	Percent	0.0	16.1	65.8	14.8	3.4%	100.00
	Non-U.S.	1	5	9	3	0	18
	Percent	5.6	27.8	50.0	16.7	0.0	100.00
	Total	1	29	107	25	5	167
	Percent	0.6	17.4	64.1	15.0	3.0	100.00

An even more significant difference exists between public (state-supported) and private institutions in regard to the amount of weight assigned reviewing. Private institutions were more varied in the weight they assigned, but generally they gave it less significance. Just under one fourth of the public schools indicated they gave it a moderately significant weight. The Chi-square test had a value of 13.42, which was significant at the .01 level. The results are shown in Table 11 (below).

TABLE 11

Type of Institution v Significance in Promotion and Tenure Decisions

		Significance in Promotion & Tenure Decisions					
		Very significant	Moderately significant	Minor significance	Trivial	Not considered	Total
Type of Institution	Private	1	2	30	10	3	46
	Percent	2.2	4.3	65.2	21.7	6.5	
	Public	0	27	77	15	2	121
	Percent	0.0	22.3	63.6	12.4	1.7	
	Total	1	29	107	25	5	167
	Percent	0.6	17.4	64.1	15.0	3.0	

Type of Activity for Annual Evaluations versus Promotion and Tenure Decisions

The extent to which annual evaluations and promotion and tenure evaluations should be linked is not a resolved issue. Common sense indicates that at least in a broad context the annual evaluation process should guide faculty toward proper performance levels to receive tenure and be promoted. To examine this issue, a crosstab was run based on how peer reviewing was classified in annual evaluations versus how it was classified for promotion and tenure decisions. The resulting Chi-square value was 120.4, which is significant at any measurable level. The degree to which the two evaluations differ is striking. Although the weight assigned at most schools is low, the number of schools that change their view of peer reviewing when they move from the annual evaluation process to promotion and tenure decisions are considerable. This is shown in Table 12 (below).

TABLE 12

Type of Activity for Annual and Promotion and Tenure Evaluations

		Use in Promotion & Tenure Decisions			
		Intellectual Contribution	Service	Not Considered	Total
Use in Annual Evaluations	Intellectual Contribution	25	7	4	36
	Percent	69.4	19.4	11.1	
	Service	1	109	10	120
	Percent	0.8	90.8	8.3	
	Not Considered	0	2	4	6
	%	0.0	33.3	66.7	
	Total	26	118	18	162
	Percent	16.0	72.8	11.1	

All of the cells in Table 12 (above) represent “AND” situations. The diagonal of the table (25, 109, 4) represents schools that treat reviewing as the same type of activity both in annual evaluations and promotion and tenure decisions. This represents situations where schools are annually leading faculty toward promotion and tenure. All of the other cases are ones where they reward faculty in one way on an annual basis and then evaluate them on an inconsistent criteria for promotion and tenure. For example, there were seven schools that treat reviewing as an intellectual contribution in their annual evaluations, but they consider it to be a service activity when it comes time for promotion and tenure. There were also two schools that didn't consider reviewing in their annual evaluations, but they count it as service in promotion and tenure decisions. (Hopefully, in those cases where inconsistencies exist, the faculty is made aware of the situation.)

Significance in Annual Evaluations versus Promotion and Tenure Decisions

As is shown in a cross tabulation in Table 13 (below), there are major differences in the weight given to reviewing in annual evaluations and in making promotion and tenure decisions. The Chi-square value for this comparison is 207.5, which is significant at any level. The overall difference is that peer reviewing becomes less significant when you move from annual evaluations to promotion and tenure decisions.

TABLE 13

Significance in Annual Evaluations versus Promotion and Tenure Decisions

		SIGNIFICANCE IN PROMOTION & TENURE DECISIONS					
		Very significant	Moderately significant	Minor significance	Trivial	Not considered	Total
Significance in Annual Evaluations	Very significant	1	1	0	0	0	2
	Percent	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
	Moderately significant	0	24	19	0	0	43
	Percent	0.0	55.8	44.2	0.0	0.0	
	Minor significance	0	3	84	12	3	102
	Percent	0.0	2.9	82.4	11.8	2.9	
	Trivial	0	1	4	12	1	18
	Percent	0.0	5.6	22.2	66.7	5.6	
	Not considered	0	0	0	1	1	2
	Percent	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.0	50.0	
	Total	1	29	107	25	5	167
	Percent	0.6	17.4	64.1	15.0	3.0	

Percentage of Faculty Reviewing for In-house Journals

Over half of the respondents indicated that they did not have in-house journals, but the percentage that clearly do have them--32 percent--seems to be too large. Perhaps schools with in-house journals are over represented in the sample. Another possibility is that there are a lot of new journals being created by AACSB-member schools of business. Based on the questions asked in this survey, there is no way to tell which, if either of these, is the case. The low weight that is given to peer reviewing in both annual evaluations and promotion and tenure decisions is very clear here, as the vast majority of schools with in-house journals say that less than 25 percent of their faculty participate in reviewing for them. The percentage of faculty at schools of business with in-house journals serving as reviewers is shown in Table 14 (below).

TABLE 14

Percentage of Faculty Reviewing for In-house Journals

	Frequency	Percent
Over 50 percent	1	0.6
26 – 50 percent	3	1.8
1 – 25 percent	49	29.3
Zero percent	14	8.4
Don't know	8	4.8
No In-house Journals	92	55.1
Total	167	100

Percentage of Faculty Reviewing for Outside Journals

As is shown in Table 15 (below) the percentage of faculty reviewing for outside journals is substantially higher than those reviewing for an in-house journal. (Unknown is whether editors solicit more or less intensely for “outside” than “inside” for reviewers.) It is interesting to note that six percent of the respondents couldn’t place their faculty in one of the broad categories. This is a clear indication that peer reviewing is not a significant factor in the strategic plans of those institutions.

TABLE 15

Percentage of Faculty Reviewing for Outside Journals

	Frequency	Percent
Over 50 percent	50	29.9
26 – 50 percent	44	26.3
1 - 25 percent	63	37.7
Zero percent	0	0
Don't know	10	6
Total	167	100

Documentation Requirements

Since many institutions do include peer reviewing in some fashion in annual evaluations and promotion and tenure decisions, it is also of interest to determine the extent of documentation that is required. A question on the survey asked the deans to indicate what documentation they required to support claimed reviewing activity.

Several possibilities were presented, ranging from the faculty member's statement all the way to requiring that they attach copies of the reviews they did. Multiple responses were allowed. After reviewing the responses, the authors found that in almost all cases, if more than a statement from the faculty member was required, virtually any documentation was acceptable. As a result, the responses were recoded as a "yes" or "no" relative to requiring documentation beyond the faculty member's assertion. Four responses could not be classified and were eliminated. Table 16 (below) reports the results.

TABLE 16
Documentation Requirement

	Frequency	Percent
No	112	68.7
Yes	51	31.3
Total	163	100.0

It is clear that the overwhelming majority of schools are very trusting in this area, with less than one third of them requiring any type of documentation to back up the claim. Crosstabs were also run against all of the institutional characteristics. The vast majority of them showed no significant differences and are not reported.

One surprising result came out when separate accounting accreditation was considered. Although there is no reason to believe that the presence of accounting accreditation should have any impact on documentation requirements, the results indicate that schools with separate accounting accreditation are less likely to require it. A Chi-square test of this data resulted in a value of 5.42, which is significant at the .02 level.

TABLE 17
Separate Accounting Accreditation versus Documentation Requirements

		Evidence Required		
		No	Yes	Total
Separate Accounting Accreditation	No	62	38	100
	%	62.0%	38.0%	100.0%
	Yes	50	13	63
	%	79.4%	20.6%	100.0%
	Total	112	51	163
	%	68.7%	31.3%	100.0%

Of the 51 institutions that require some type of evidence, 31 indicated that a copy of the editorial board page from the journal was acceptable evidence, and 14 of those indicated this as being the specific evidence that they are looking for. This raises a question about how diligent editors are in purging names that have not actually made any contributions in an extended period of time. There is certainly reason to believe that

editors would not want to purge high profile individuals or individuals from high profile schools since they add prestige to the journal. At the same time, these individuals may be getting credit for activity that they are not actually engaging in.

Conclusions

Despite the fact that quality certification of academic research is essential, the survey reported on in this paper reveals that, as was expected, peer reviewing for academic journals is not an activity that is highly valued by AACSB- accredited institutions.

Surprisingly, the survey reveals that school size and research intensity, as measured by the highest degree offered, does not seem to make any difference in how much weight is placed on serving as a reviewer for an academic journal.

This survey reveals that in the United States there are distinct differences in how reviewing is valued by government-supported business schools and private business schools. Differences also exist between schools of business the U.S. and those located in other countries. Because the incentive to serve as a reviewer is less at government-supported business schools, perhaps in the U.S. they are not the best place for the editors of academic journals to seek reviewers.

Possibly AACSB visiting teams should point out to deans the importance of encouraging their faculty to serve as reviewers in order to assure that what is published is of high quality.

Note: The authors are grateful for the College of Business at Nicholls State University for providing the resources needed to conduct this survey.

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