ABSTRACT

A key challenge for people that are new to reviewing is pitching the review at the right level, and getting the tone and structure of a review right. This course aims to help participants understand a) the different expectations of different venues and submission types, b) the processes they use to make decisions, and c) good techniques for producing a review for these different circumstances. Combined with developing a good understanding of these different expectations, participants have a chance to critique anonymised but real reviews, and try to guess the venue they are written for and the recommendation they make.

CCS CONCEPTS
- Human-centered computing → Human computer interaction (HCI).

KEYWORDS
Peer Review, Reviewing, Reviewer

1 INTRODUCTION

A key challenge for new reviewers is comprehending the expectations that different venues (journals versus conferences versus workshops) may have, for different types of submissions (full papers versus demos versus late breaking work), and the subsequent decisions processes for each. Consequently, it is not uncommon for new reviewers to be unnecessarily harsh or overly lenient on issues for a particular venue and type, and to put too much or too little time into reviews. This problem is exacerbated in highly interdisciplinary research fields like HCI, where even established reviewers need to be aware of expectations for different types of work [8].

At the same time, we are becoming increasingly dependent on expanding the reviewer pool, making tweaks annually to CHI’s reviewing process to reduce demand in the face of annual growth in submission numbers [3]. Meanwhile, people in our field raise concerns in community forums about the experience levels of reviewers looking at many CHI papers, whilst others recommend more stringent forms of review to increase rigour in our field [6]. This growth and its demand on increasingly novice reviewers is a concern that many fields experience and try to confront [1, 10].

Encouraging people to review is also a challenge, as we feel busy with many demands, where this feeling was only exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic in a way that many researchers still feel as a knock on effect. With many experts being needed further up the reviewer framework (as e.g. senior reviews (ACs) or subcommittee chairs (SCs), we become dependent on new novice reviewers perhaps reviewing for the first time. Many students learn by being coached by their supervisors, perhaps by the supervisor giving students papers to draft-review before completing the review themselves. Many reviewers, however, do not have this opportunity.

1.1 Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to help people to:

1. Understand the different types of contributions submitted to different venues.
2. Understand the different processes used by different venues (for different types of submissions).
3. Reflect on what senior reviewers want from a review (and therefore how they might be structured).
4. Critique example reviews for different types of submissions for different types of venues.

1.2 Audience and Prerequisites

This course is aimed at new PhD students, or other students intending to pursue a research programme, or indeed anyone that feels that they are ‘new’ to reviewing and want to broaden their experience. The course may also be useful for people that have begun reviewing, but want to be prepared for reviewing contributions in other types of venues. In general, there are no prerequisites to participating in the course.
2 COURSE CONTENT

The course, which has been delivered in person at 4 previous occasions, and fully online three times, is broken up into two main halves: comprehension of venues and submission types, and understanding the components of a good review.

Part 1 is focused on the first two learning outcomes. It is intended to help participants reflect on why we submit different types of submissions to different venues, and what those venues want. For example, a workshop typically wants material that invites discussion and presents exciting early ideas. Where as full peer-reviewed venues like journals and some high ranking conferences, want important, novel, significant, and rigorous submissions. By doing this, we also discuss the different roles involved in making the decision, and the processes used by people in those roles to make them. We compare, therefore, typical journal processes (including advertised flow diagrams, and the instructors experiences as a Deputy Editor and Associate Editor), extreme examples of conference processes (as used at e.g. CHI), and those used by small groups of workshop organisers.

The process involved in the first part also serves as a chance for the instructor to comprehend the variety of research fields (in this case different fields relating to CHI) of participants, and the types of venues people might submit to.

Part 2 is focused on considering the structure of reviews, based upon the reflective understanding of venues built up in part 1. The purpose of a review is considered from the perspective of the same journal article, which vary dramatically in their recommendation and quality.

Although certain formal guides exist (e.g. [12]), these vary heavily from discipline to discipline. Instead, as we progress through the content of the course, we consider official resources produced by publishers like Springer [11], Elsevier [5], and Nature [13], as well as advice from experts in our own community [2, 4, 7, 9]. A recent community contribution is a detailed working-document guide to reviewing for CHI. This course complements such guides (with often act as a checklist and process overview), with more generalised and reflective insights into reviewing practices.

Participants are able to keep copies of the example reviews, and are given a digital handout with key information slides and links to resources.

2.2 Resources

The workshop is primarily an engaging discussion, rather than being highly dependent on resources. Much of the course, therefore, is suitable for many as long as the venue is accessible. If attendees have disabilities that limit communication, then appropriate table-specific adaptions can be made to facilitate communication e.g. through the workshop materials on the table. The two main documents involved (slides and example reviews) will be produced in high contrast versions and a large font version can be produced if required according to advance attendee information provided.

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3 INSTRUCTOR BACKGROUND

The course is delivered by Dr Max L. Wilson, as Associate Professor at the University of Nottingham. Max, who sits on the CHI Steering Committee, has been a reviewer for CHI for 15 years, and has reviewed for many other conferences including CSCW, UIST, SIGIR, CHIIR (and its former IIiX), ISWC, WWW, UbiComp and MobileHCI. Max has also reviewed for journals including: JASIST, JWS, IJHCI, IP&M, TOIS, TOCHI.

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