

## **Peer-reviewing: New Challenges for Academic Publication**

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Volume 65, numéro 1, 2023

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1109794ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.18357/anthropologica65120232658>

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Éditeur(s)

University of Victoria

ISSN

0003-5459 (imprimé)

2292-3586 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce document

Boudreault-Fournier, A., Frohlick, S. & Truchon, K. (2023). Peer-reviewing: New Challenges for Academic Publication. *Anthropologica*, 65(1), 1-4.  
<https://doi.org/10.18357/anthropologica65120232658>

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# Note from the Editors

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## Peer-reviewing: New Challenges for Academic Publication

Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier, Sue Frohlick and Karoline Truchon

Every published issue comes with a feeling of accomplishment and pride. Publication is also a time to reflect on the successes and challenges of putting out an open-access and bilingual academic journal, from the first stage of receiving a manuscript to pre-publication proofreading. Without question our editorial team has noticed radical changes since the pandemic. A critical change is the new difficulties in finding peer reviewers to evaluate the submissions. All articles submitted to *Anthropologica*, including those for special features, undergo an anonymous peer review process. These days we must often ask more than eight to ten potential reviewers just to find two willing to take on the task. This is a trend particularly acute since the pandemic. We are not the only editorial team to have noticed this. A conversation with other academic journal editors at the American Anthropological Association meeting in Seattle in 2022 confirmed that many journals are also facing the same issue. The difficulty in finding reviewers comes at a time when the process and value of peer reviewing are seriously questioned. Take, for example, the controversy surrounding an academic journal's publication of a manuscript about masturbating to comics of young boys as a form of valuable ethnographic methodology.<sup>1</sup> One wonders how anonymous reviewers could have let that go, not to mention the editorial team that agreed to publish the piece despite ethical concerns. Others such as Docot (2022) reflect on the sometimes abusive and harmful process involved in the academic peer review process, which often disproportionately targets more vulnerable and/or BIPOC scholars. We have given these issues thought and made changes in light of them, aware that much work remains to better the peer review process. Influenced by the work of some journals such as *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology*, the *Anthropologica* team changed its evaluation guidelines and process in 2021 with the goal of encouraging peer reviewers

to write with a mindset that is fair and generous—generous in collegiality and substance. Additionally, our desire to increase multimodal submissions in *Anthropologica* also encourages us to reflect on the process of evaluating media projects, which, because of their format, are not as easily modified in response to reviewers' feedback. Many questions remain. We hope to continue the conversation about novel ways to approach the process of peer reviewing, which remains an important criterion for tenure, among other things, and to find solutions to the many challenges of academic peer review. We also hope to find a way to acknowledge the time and involvement of fabulous reviewers.

We are excited to celebrate and share with you the thematic issue “Contemporary Spiritualities on a Global Scale: Ethnographic Perspectives” with guest editors Géraldine Mossière and Marie-Nathalie LeBlanc. The eight manuscripts included in this thematic issue contribute to deconstructing ethnocentric discourses on the notion of spirituality. From asceticism and conversion (de Guise; Boucher) to New Age narratives (Farahmand, Piraud and Rouiller; Parmigiani; Dansac; Obadia), and the experience of “vivre ensemble” for women practicing Sufism in Montreal (Mekki-Berrada, Rousseau and Ben Driss), the manuscripts demonstrate that spirituality takes various shapes and that it is fluid and complex. The concept of spirituality has been (and still is) appropriated and used to diminish the complexity of certain beliefs and practices. Yet, while reflecting on their own communities, LeBlanc and Gareau show that Indigenous spirituality / religion represents situated knowledges and socio-political relations, challenging the possessiveness of settler colonial narratives. The authors further suggest that Indigenous spirituality / religion allows for the creation of collective and co-constitutive nations / peoples.

Along with this thematic issue, we are proud to publish our inaugural “Seedings” series titled “Supply Chains and Commodities: Interruptions, Shortage, Crises?”. The four manuscripts published in this series respond to a call launched in December 2022 while we faced various types of shortages—from cement to mountain bikes to batteries to epidural tubes—all consequences of the pandemic. In looking at the Coronavirus Makers in Barcelona, Lambert reflects on the agency and creativity of the makers who responded to the personal protective equipment shortage during the pandemic by using 3D printing. In a comparative study of diverse ports around the world, Escobar, Leivestad, Poulimenakos, Schober, and Sibilia show the complex web of interconnections making up the global supply chain. Lamontagne-Cumiford

and Lillis discuss the pressure and the reasons behind the recent interest in digitizing and automating the supply chain and transport industry. Zhang traces the global pharmaceutical supply chains to thoroughly explain the antibiotic shortage during and after the pandemic.

Through our new Seedings series, we aim to grow and plant ideas. The series will emerge from irregular calls for paper inspired by world events. Our hope for the series is to stimulate emerging, spontaneous, creative, multimodal, timely, and ethnographically grounded submissions on contemporary topics. Our next Seedings call, “Fire Alert,” invites ethnographically-based manuscripts that engage with the dramatic spread of wildfires in North America and elsewhere in the world. Through the Seedings section we aspire to stimulate shorter, provisional, “raw” pieces that engage with timely topics.

In addition to the Seedings series, four manuscripts about the COVID-19 pandemic provide ethnographic reflections on the pandemic as lived in France (Black), Serbia (Uzelac), Latvia (Pokšāns et al.), and Norway (Gross).

Finally, five non-thematic manuscripts develop a broad range of topics. Wiley writes about wellness in the context of an American University that produces normative expectations that do not always cultivate the well-being of its students. Wagner digs into the Columbia Treaty to demonstrate its connection with the colonial project as well as its impact on the food system. Roupnel discusses the challenges of a post-traumatic stress disorder diagnosis for soldiers in France. In presenting a series of transcripts from several conversations with Navajo poets, Webster proposes the concept of “verdant ethnography,” a form of writing that speaks to a sense of living. And, for the first time, we are publishing a manuscript about artificial intelligence and its impact on the classroom, with one of the co-authors being GPT-3 AI generated (that is, Sarah Jones in McIlwraith, Finnis and Jones).

To end, we would like to thank our book manuscript editors, Daniel Tubb and Karine Gagné, for their tremendous work with the book reviews in *Anthropologica*. Your commitment to the journal was greatly appreciated. We welcome Marie Michèle Grenon and Noah Pleshet, who will be taking over as book editors for the francophone and anglophone submissions, respectively.

We hope you enjoy this issue and we encourage you to share it with your colleagues and students. The *Anthropologica* team remains open to any ideas you would like to share with us. We look forward to hearing from you.

## Note

1 This article in *The Guardian* provides good background information on the story: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/aug/11/manchester-university-phd-masturbating-to-comics-of-young-boys>.

## Reference

Docot, Dada. 2022. "Dispirited Away: The Peer Review Process." *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 45(1):124–128. <https://doi.org/10.1111/plar.12479>.