

Guidelines for L&O reviewers

L&O receives many more scientifically correct submissions than we have space to print. We must therefore turn away papers if they are not of general interest and applicability or if they do not significantly advance aquatic science. You are being asked to advise the Associate Editor whether the paper before you is worthy of publication in L&O. The most important part of your review is your recommendation to the editor and the reasoning behind your recommendation. Based on the reasons that both reviewers give for their recommendations, the Associate Editor's evaluation of the paper, and the journal's editorial standards, the Associate Editor will accept, reject, or invite the author to revise the paper for further consideration.

A good review is a creative document that advances science. In addition to identifying shortcomings, a good review provides guidance to the author for improving the work and presentation. Comments in a good review are made in a helpful manner, even if the paper is not destined for publication in L&O; harshly-worded comments reduce the effectiveness of a review and diminish the stature of the journal.

Scholarly reviews are a relatively new feature of L&O (begun autumn 2005). They clearly do not carry the requirement for (but nevertheless may contain) original data, as regular L&O Articles. If you have been asked to review this type of manuscript we ask you in addition to the normal L&O review criteria to evaluate whether the review is both timely and needed. Novelty of the approach and likely impact on practice and thought, as with all L&O manuscripts, remain essential discriminants of those reviews that will be accepted for publication in the limited space available.

Your review *and the manuscript* are confidential! If the paper is subsequently revised and the revision is sent out for further review, the other reviewers will see the parts of your review that were sent to the author, together with the author's detailed responses to all reviews. Unless you explicitly state that you want your identity revealed to the author, only the Associate Editor will know your name.

How to structure your review

Please send your review in three distinct parts:

Part 1. General comments (sent to the author). Briefly state what this paper contributes to the fields of limnology and oceanography. Is it original, and will it have broad and deep impact? Ask yourself, "If it were published in L&O would I use this paper and cite it?" If so, in what context and for what reasons? If not, why not? *Do **not** include your recommendation to the editor (i.e., to accept or reject the paper) in this part of the review.*

Part 2. Detailed comments (sent to the author). Make concrete suggestions for improvement, criticize specific paragraphs, figures, or tables, and identify sections that could be eliminated or modified. If you recommend changing the scope of the paper give reasons why, but do not say that it should be a Note rather than an Article (L&O no longer publishes the Note format). The following questions may be of help:

- **Data:** Could the experimental or sampling design be conveyed more clearly? Would another form of presentation (figure, equation, table, or text) help? Are other details needed before a reader can reproduce the results?
- **Analysis and interpretation:** Do the data support the conclusions of the authors? Is this a complete study or is more investigation needed? Do the authors speculate enough or too much?
- **Balance:** Is opinion clearly distinguished from fact? Should other sides of an argument be presented?
- **Originality:** Is the study novel and interesting or a repeat of other work, perhaps in a new environment? Will this paper have an impact?
- **Presentation:** Are the data clearly presented? Is the writing concise and understandable? Is L&O the right journal for this paper?

Part 3. Recommendation to the Associate Editor (not sent to the author). Please start this part of your review on a new page. Recommend to the Associate Editor what you believe the fate of this paper should be (one of the three categories listed below) and state why this paper does or does not merit publication **specifically** in L&O. If there is nothing seriously wrong with a paper, reviewers in the past have tended to dwell on details (i.e., Part 2 of the review) but have avoided saying whether the paper should be published in L&O. The Associate Editor needs to know whether you believe that this work is of worthy of publication in L&O. Recommend one of the following actions:

- **Accept for L&O after suitable revision.** This paper will *probably* be ultimately accepted. Indicate whether your recommended revisions are minor or major in scope, and whether you are willing to review the author's revision.
- **Reject, but encourage resubmission to L&O.** Some of the material is worthy of publication in L&O, but the needed revisions are so extensive that any resubmission should be considered a new paper (i.e., given a new manuscript number). Again, indicate whether you are willing to review the revision if it is submitted.
- **Reject without possibility of resubmission to L&O.** The material is not worthy of publication in L&O. If a revision might be publishable elsewhere, name some journals that the author might consider.

"Accept for L&O after suitable revision" does *not* mean that you are giving this paper a green light—any problems that you identify must be satisfactorily addressed before it will be accepted. "Reject, but encourage resubmission to L&O" is the trickiest recommendation. It is tempting to use it for marginal papers, but we have found that most reviewers remain lukewarm about revisions of these papers and almost all are eventually rejected following several months of waiting and a lot of work for the author, Editorial Office staff, Associate Editor, and reviewers. In retrospect, it would have been better for everyone involved if the paper had been definitively rejected at the outset. Thus, the "Reject, but encourage resubmission to L&O" recommendation should be used only if you can envision how a radical transformation of the paper would make it acceptable.

This section can also include information that could compromise the identity of the reviewer.

Please put something like "END OF REVIEW" at the bottom of your review. We occasionally receive incomplete files; this line lets us know that we have received all of your review.

How to return your review

L&O does not have an online review submission form. Send your review to:

E-mail: lo-editor@aslo.org

Hard copy:

L&O Editorial Office
343 Lady MacDonald Crescent
Canmore, Alberta T1W 1H5 Canada

fax: (403) 609-2400
phone: (403) 609-2456

We prefer to receive reviews by E-mail; if you send yours by regular mail or fax, please also send a copy by E-mail. Regardless of how you return your review, be sure to cite the manuscript reference number. We will acknowledge receipt of your review by E-mail unless you request otherwise. Marked manuscripts (or portions thereof) returned by regular mail are sent only to the author. Because the Associate Editor—the person that makes the accept/reject decision—will not see the marked manuscript, it should not contain information critical to the accept/reject decision.