Reviewing papers and writing response letters

Elena Parmiggiani
IDI, NTNU
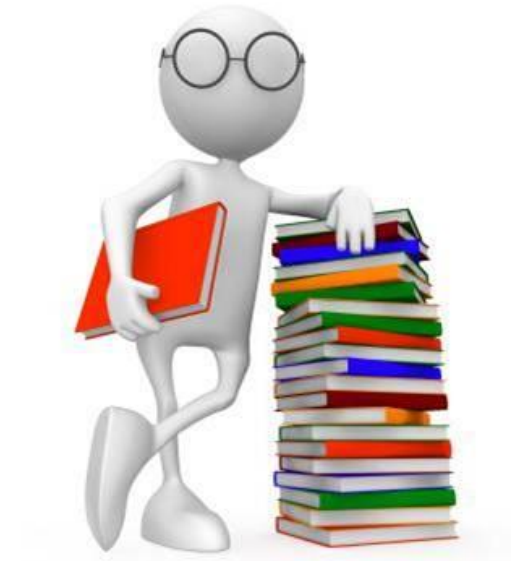*(parmiggi)@ntnu.no*
May 3rd, 2017

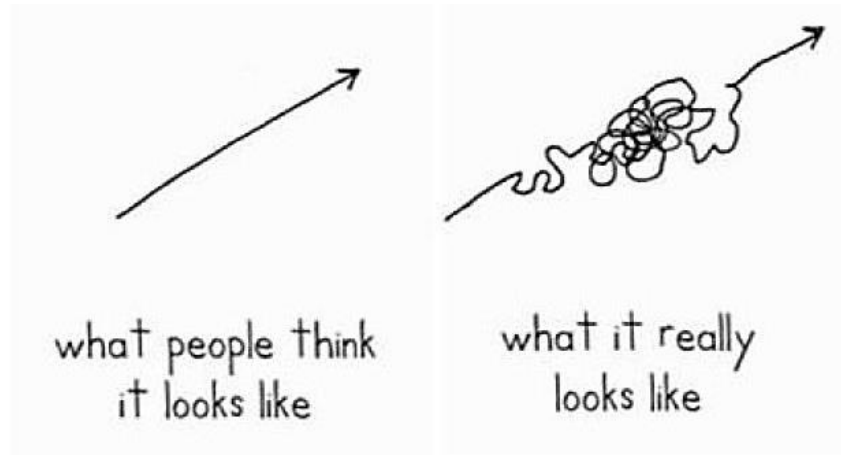[Based on a workshop arranged with Monica Divitini]

Outline

1. Motivations

2. The review system in brief

3. How to review well? [By Monica Divitini]

4. How to receive a review: The response letter

Motivations

1. A (never-ending) **learning process**
   - You read to review, you learn to *write better*
   - You evaluate, you learn to *evaluate better*
   - You get your work reviewed, you *improve your work*

2. **Part of the game**
   - You have to *give* if you want to *receive*
   - You have to *behave* if you expect others to behave

3. **Reputation** within academia
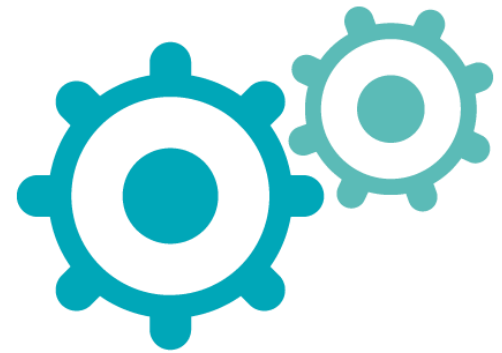   - It helps to build your *carrer*

IN MY BUSINESS REPUTATION IS EVERYTHING!

what people think it looks like

what it really looks like

THE REVIEW SYSTEM IN BRIEF

Introduction

- Review *process*

- Two sides of the same coin

- NB! Conference =/= journal

  - Conferences have time constraints (e.g., 3 months between submission and notification of acceptance/reject)

  - Journals in general have weaker time constraints (exceptions: Special issues)

  - Reviews are generally longer and more detailed for journal papers

  - You might have several review/revision rounds for a journal
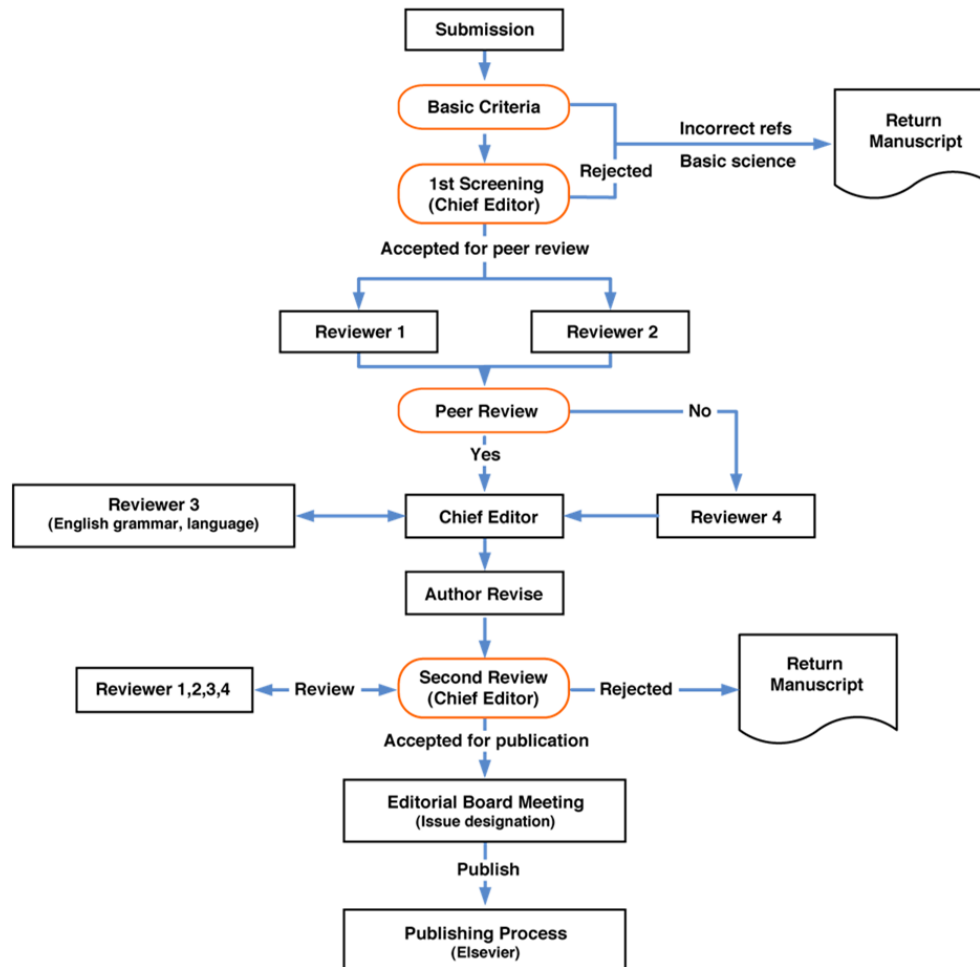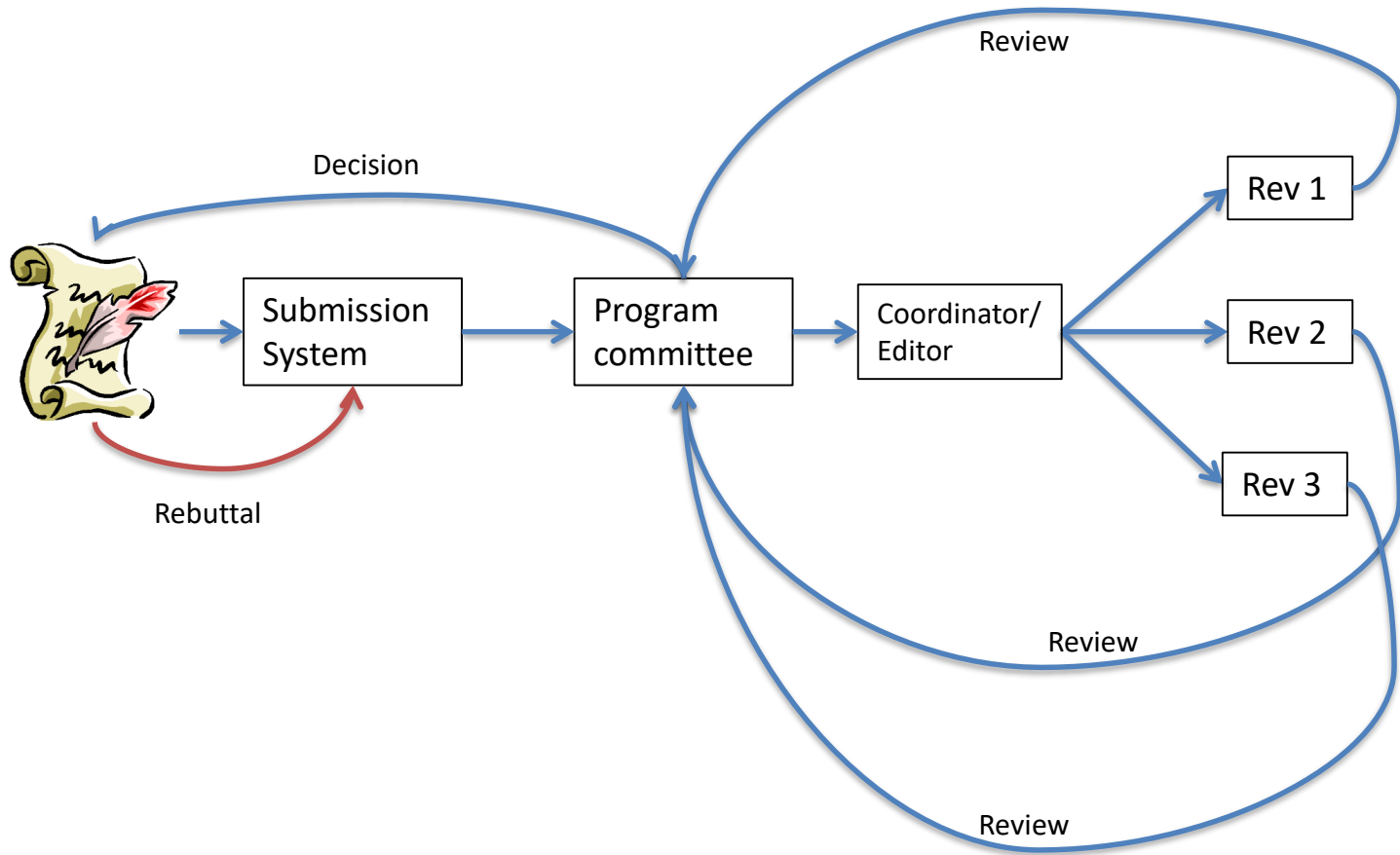
A call for paper is out…

- ECIS 2016: http://ecis2016.eu/en/RESEARCH-PAPERS.html

- CSCW 2016: https://cscw.acm.org/2016/submit/papers.php

...The peer review process from the point of view of the author

Submission

Basic Criteria → Incorrect refs / Basic science → Return Manuscript

1st Screening (Chief Editor) — Rejected

Accepted for peer review

Reviewer 1   Reviewer 2

Peer Review → No

Yes

Reviewer 3 (English grammar, language) ← Chief Editor ← Reviewer 4

Author Revise

Reviewer 1,2,3,4 ← Review ← Second Review (Chief Editor) → Rejected → Return Manuscript

Accepted for publication

Editorial Board Meeting (Issue designation)

Publish

Publishing Process (Elsevier)

Example from: www.elsevier.com/reviewers/what-is-peer-review

Example: CSCW (also ECIS/ICIS)

Visibility

- **Double-Blind Review**
  - Both the reviewer and the author are anonymous.
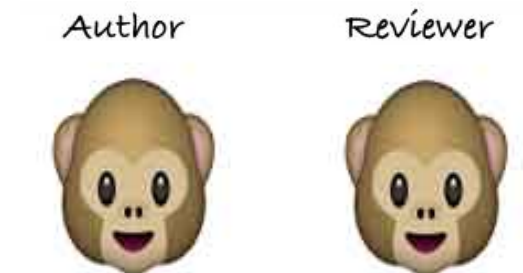 - Used sometimes, e.g. jCSCW.

- **Single Blind Review**
  - Reviewers' names and affiliation hidden from the author.
  - Traditional method; most common.

- **Open Review**
  - Reviewer and author are known to each other.
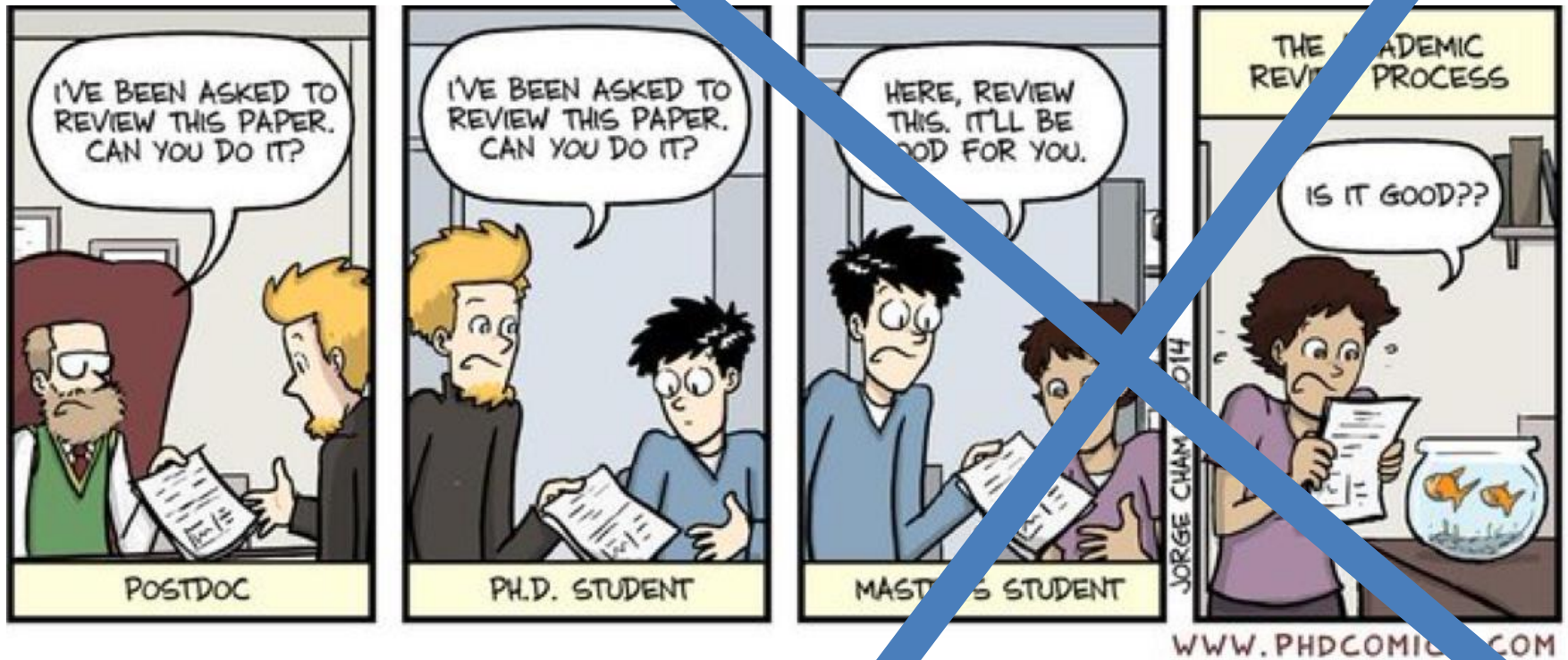 - Used sometimes, e.g. for book chapters.

As a reviewer…

HOW TO REVIEW *WELL*?

Grab the opportunity!

Reputation: We are all profiled!

People Notes

Insert Special Character

Personal Classifications (* indicates match with document)

None

Current Review Statistics

Date Last Agreed	Reviews in Progress	Outstanding Invitations
	0	1

Historical Invitation Statistics

Total Invitations	Agreed to Review	Declined to Review	Un-invited Before Agreeing to Review	Terminated Before Agreeing to Review
1	0	0	0	0

Historical Reviewer Performance Summary

Total Completed Reviews	Submitted on Time	Submitted Late	Un-invited After Agreeing to Review	Terminated After Agreeing to Review	Date Last Review Completed
0	0	0	0	0	

Historical Averages

Days to Respond to Invitation	Days to Complete Review	Days Late	# of Reminders	Manuscript Rating	Reviewer Rating
0	0	0	0	0	0

Recommendation Summary

Accept:	0
Major Revision:	0
Minor Revision:	0
Reject:	0

You engage in a *discussion*, with responsibility

reject?
0.3 WITHDRAWN
0.3 reject?
0.3 reject?
0.3 reject?
0.3 reject?

2(3),0(4),-1(4)
1(4),-1(4),1(3)
0(3),2(4),-1(3)
1(3),2(4),-2(2)
1(4),0(4),0(4)
0(3),0(4),1(3)

YOU

JORGE CHAM © 2014

c'mon!

WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

How do you help the organizers/editors to make the right choice? Remember the goal is to bring forward YOUR research community

How do you write your review in a constructive way to help improve the paper, even if you suggest a rejection?

When you get a review request…

- Check the abstract/paper
- Be honest – say no if you do not feel competent (or ask someone more experienced in your group for mentoring)
- Check the deadline (…though it is never the right time ;)
- Accept/reject the invitation quickly

If you are able to help with the review of this manuscript (you can see the format of review form at: http://www.ifets.info/review_form_sample.html), please click on the link below to accept the review assignment:

http://www.ifets.info/ets_journal/admin/acknowledge.php?id=247197c7a8c46c29c426bab10dafc7f41aa (if the link does not open, copy and paste the link to your browser)

Write a good report

- Use the template given by the conference/journal

- If there is none, you can use a good one as starting point

- Divide major and minor issues

- Try to be as specific as possible

- Think what should go to the authors and comments that go only to the editor

Confidential remarks for the program committee:	I'm not an expert at all in AI. I can't go deeper in the concepts described in this paper but my overall feeling is that the idea is good enough to accept a presentation of this work during the confrence.

Reviewer 2 – you could have done a better job!

"The paper describes the design research process of …. The theme of the article is very interesting and relevant for this conference. Basically, the paper has a lot potential. This paper has a clear structure. Figures are great and there is a succifient background chapter. The paper is pretty well written. The language is fluent and it is easy to read. The language follows an academic style. This is a quite good paper. I recommend publication and I'm looking forward to read your next paper based on the future work discussed in this paper."

Some suggestions from MobileHCI

- "…the chief responsibility of a program committee member is to *accept papers*, and not to find flaws and reject work at every opportunity."

- "…commentaries should be directed to helping authors produce the best papers possible, whether a particular paper is ultimately accepted to a venue or not…"

From [1] **Ken Hinckley, So You're a Program Committee Member Now:** *On Excellence in Reviews and Meta-Reviews and Championing Submitted Work That Has Merit* **2015**
http://mobilehci.acm.org/2015/download/ExcellenceInReviewsforHCICommunity.pdf

Some excerpt from [1]

An easy trap for reviewing is to be overconfident of your opinion. …

- Did you understand the author's goals, results, and discussions correctly?

- Is it possible that communities with interests and concerns different from your own would find the work informative, even inspiring?

- Does the paper touch on an area you don't know very well?

- Or is it by an "outsider" who perhaps touches on an area you know all too well, and hence harbor strong opinions that you might not like to see challenged?

Beware of all these pitfalls when making your remarks, and remember that on the other side of the page there are equally well-intentioned authors who are trying to articulate the contributions of their research.

If there is discussion before the final decision…

- Engage in the discussion
- Be ready to defend your opinion
- …but also to revise your evaluation

	date	Overall evaluation	Reviewer's confidence
Review 1	Mar 7	2	5
Review 2	Mar 8	0	5
Review 3	Mar 11	−2	5
Review 2	Mar 20	−2	5
Review 1	Mar 21	−1	5

Confidential remarks for the program committee:	I lowered my score after reading other people review -- I agree with them on some points yet I am still positive on the paper

As the author of a manuscript…

HOW TO *RECEIVE* A REVIEW & THE RESPONSE LETTER

How to receive a review?

- To learn to write **a better article** (especially after a 'reject')

- To learn to **be critical** towards **your own** articles

  - «The reviewers understood nothing!»
  - «They haven't even read my article!»
    - This is not a very constructive attitude.

  - It's not only about the content, it's also about the **form**:
    - the less clear the message, the less a reviewer is invited to read;
    - the more typos, the more irritation;
    - badly done bibliography does not help the article either...

The response letter

http://www.phdcomics.com/comics.php?f=581

In general…

- Be polite ☺

- For conferences: Coincise, but precise and convincing!

- For journals: Often longer (my average is ca 8 pages)

How to write it...

- **What you want to say:** *You just didn't understand what we wrote!*
- **What you should say:** *Several statements that we made were more ambiguous than intended, and we have adjusted to the text to be clearer.*

- **What you want to say:** *No one knows the answer to that question.*
- **What you should say:** *This is a valid question, and we are actively pursuing the answer in our lab.* **OR** *This is a valid and important question, and we are curious what the results would be. However, we are unaware of any studies that provide the answer.*

- **What you want to say:** *That experiment would take forever!*
- **What you should say:** *The suggested experiment is interesting and would provide additional information about..., but we feel that it falls outside the scope of this study.*

- **What you want to say:** *You didn't even read what we wrote!*
- **What you should say:** *We did not intend to indicate [insert mistaken assertion by reviewer here], and we have therefore altered the text to specify that [insert correct conclusion here].*

- ...

- See: https://www.aje.com/en/author-resources/articles/responding-reviewers-you-cant-always-say-what-youd

How to structure it...

1. By **theme** raised by reviewing team

2. **Point-by-point**

3. A **combination** of both

By **theme**

- See printouts

- See changelog CSCW 2013

Change log for CSCW Submission #131

We appreciate the detailed reviews for this paper. Here, we document how our paper evolved with respect to the reviewer suggestions.

Comparisons across diverse populations (AC, R2)

Both the AC and R2 wondered whether it was reasonable to compare the findings of our survey to those of Morris's 2006 survey, due to audience differences (we report data from a diverse sample of adults, whereas Morris reported data from Microsoft employees). We intentionally recruited a diverse audience in order to obtain a more representative sample of how "typical" Americans engage in collaborative search, since Microsoft employees are not typical in many respects (educational status, socioeconomic status, attitudes toward and access to technology). However, we acknowledge explicitly in the paper that some of the differences we present in our paper may in fact be due to these audience differences. To address this concern, we have gathered new data – in July 2012, we issued the same survey to employees of a large technology company <name withheld for blind review>, randomly selected from this company's corporate email list. As our updates to the paper describe in more detail, the 2012 tech employee data is extremely similar to the 2012 diverse sample data; these new data increase confidence that audience differences are not the basis of the changes we report, and increase the legitimacy of using the prior Morris study as a benchmark for comparison. These updates are included in a paragraph added to the "Discussion -> Limitations" sub-section.

Typos (R1, R3)

R1 and R3 each identified a few typos, which we have corrected.

R3 observed that we made a typographical error in the "Social Networking Sites" sub-section when describing the strength of the correlation between lurking rate and Q&A rate on SNSes – we incorrectly described the correlation as "mild" when we meant to say that it was "strong" (since r=-.94 is quite a strong correlation, indeed!). We have corrected that description!

R1 also pointed out that the values for group sizes in the "Group Configurations" sub-section add up to 100.1% -- we double-checked all these numbers, and this is just due to rounding error – all of the values reported are accurate according the standard rules of rounding -- if we expanded beyond a single decimal place, some of that rounding error would disappear, but that level of specificity doesn't seem necessary for the data in question.

Point-by-point (e.g., a table)

Dear Editor and Reviewers,

Thank you very much for your feedback, which in our opinion has resulted in significant improvements to the article. In the following, we, as requested in the ECIS 2014 conditional accept letter, address the comments made by the review team, and explain how their feedback has been addressed in the revised version of the paper. I have applied a tabular format, with the review team's comments in the left column and our responses on the right.

Nr	Associate Editor	Response
1	Some more effort should go into more clearly defining the objectives of this research and clarifying how the capabilities "convergence" and "maintenance" were derived and how they are defined	We have rewritten the introduction to better clarify the objectives and explicitly added the research questions that guided the research. We have also made more explicit in the introduction how the capabilities were derived and their definition. Also, the extensions and clarifications made in the method section (see item 4 below), should serve to explain how the capabilities were conceptualised.
2	The following two major concerns need to be addressed: firstly, all three reviewers point out the weak connection between the findings and discussion of the sociomaterial capabilities on the one hand and the seven IS design guidelines on the other hand. A clearer, more methodical and complete description of the approach is needed here to illustrate the link and how the seven recommendations for design practice were derived.	We addressed this comment by writing the method and case section in more elaborate detail. First, we clarified that our study is a multiple-case holistic study (according to Yin (2009)) theoretically sampled based on strategic relevance. We then inserted a table listing all the sources of data generation and the amount of data collected. We also clarified how interviews and participatory observations happened in practiced. We have also expanded the description of the data analysis process by going through Klein and Myers (1999)'s principle for interpretive research. In so doing, in particular, we explained our combination of an inductive and deductive approach and how we decided to present the sociomaterial capabilities as

		narratives and the design implications as a generalization of our findings (according to Walsham 1995).
3	The second concern refers to the use of the notion of sociomateriality. Here, I have to rely on two of the reviewers who have strong expertise with regard to the current debate on sociomateriality. Both reviewers criticise the use of the notion in this paper and feel that what is described is more likely a socio-technical (socio-material) system rather than a sociomaterial system. They request the inclusion of a clear statement about and discussion of the authors' ontological stance against the background of the current debate.	We rewrote the introduction to clarify our position in the Mutch versus Orlikowski (and we would add Leonardi and Kautz and Jensen) debate. We also have made the language more consistent by using the term sociomaterial imbrication throughout the article signalling that our "ontological" stance resonate more with the sociomaterial conceptualisations of Leonardi. See in particular paragraph 2 and 3 in the introduction.
	Review #1	
4	In the context of the recent debate on sociomateriality (Mutch, 2013; Orlikowski and Scott, 2013) the conceptualization of sociomateriality used by the authors falls on the side that should better be spelled socio-material rather than sociomaterial as the material and the social are understood to be ontological separate entities that interact with each other	We agree with this comment, and this has been addressed as part of item 3 above.
5	As the work is currently written, both positions are mixed, however, the empirical work presented and the discussion of it would, in my eyes, sit more comfortable in a position that does not draw from an argumentation of entanglement. Being clear about this can potentially avoid confusion by future readers and avoid adverse reactions by researchers taking a perspective of sociomateriality as an intra-active	Agreed. We have rewritten the paper in order to clarify our position and are now consistently using the concept of imbrication from Leonardi throughout the paper.

Main themes **+** point by point

- A combination of the previous two:
  - Key, general themes first to outline the overall review strategy
  - Detailed response to each reviewer's concern

- Used for, e.g., journals

- See printouts

And if you get a reject...

Rejection of rejection letter
[*insert university emblem here*]

Dear Professor [*insert name of editor*]

[*Re: MS 2015_XXXX Insert title of ground-breaking study here*]

Thank you for your rejection of the above manuscript.

Unfortunately we are not able to accept it at this time. As you are probably aware we receive many rejections each year and are simply not able to accept them all. In fact, with increasing pressure on citation rates and fiercely competitive funding structures we typically accept fewer than 30% of the rejections we receive. Please don't take this as a reflection of your work. The standard of some of the rejections we receive is very high.

In terms of the specific factors influencing our decision the failure by Assessor 1 to realise the brilliance of the study was certainly one of them. Simply stating "this study is neither novel nor interesting and does not extend knowledge in this area" is not reason enough. This, coupled with the use of Latin quotes by Assessor 2, rendered an acceptance of your rejection extremely unlikely.

We do wish you and your editorial team every success with your rejections in the future and hope they find safe harbour elsewhere. To this end, may we suggest you send one to [*insert name of rival research group*] for consideration. They accept rejections from some very influential journals.
Please understand that our decision regarding your rejection is final. We have uploaded the final manuscript in its original form, along with the signed copyright transfer form.

We look forward to receiving the proofs and to working with you in the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr [*insert name here*]
[*Insert research group acronym here*]
[*Insert university here*]
[*Insert country here—that is, Australia/New Zealand/small European Country/Canada*]

Source: http://www.bmj.com/content/351/bmj.h6326.full.pdf+html

Resources

Review process:

Conferences:

- CHI: https://chi2016.acm.org/wp/papers-and-notes-review-process/

Journals:

- ISR: http://pubsonline.informs.org/page/isre/review-process-and-stats
- MISQ: http://www.misq.org/review-process

CFPs

Conferences:

- ECIS, with tracks description: http://ecis2016.eu/en/RESEARCH-PAPERS.html
- CSCW also with review process: https://cscw.acm.org/2016/submit/papers.php

Journals:

- ISR special issues: http://pubsonline.informs.org/page/isre/calls-for-papers

Miscellaneous:

- On writing excellent reviews: https://kenhinckley.wordpress.com/2015/10/15/commentary-on-excellence-in-reviews-thoughts-for-the-hci-community/
- http://greatresearch.org/2013/10/18/the-paper-reviewing-process/
- For fun: http://www.bmj.com/content/351/bmj.h6326.full.pdf+html
- Response letters: https://www.aje.com/en/author-resources/articles/responding-reviewers-you-cant-always-say-what-youd
- Overall :): http://www.phdcomics.com/comics.php?f=581

A good quick online course

ckwards one page of the research.
own to show history

Ask questions such as:

- What research question/s do the authors address? Do they make a good argument for why a question is important?

- What methods do the authors use to answer the question? Does their overall strategy seem like a good one, or are there major problems with their methods? Are there other experiments that would greatly improve the quality of the manuscript? If so, are they necessary to make the work publishable? Would any different data help confirm the presented results and strengthen the paper?

- Were the results analyzed and interpreted correctly? Does the evidence support the authors' conclusions?

- Will the results advance your field in some way? If so, how much? Does the importance of the advance match the standards of the journal?

- Will other researchers be interested in reading the study? If so, what types of researchers? Do they match the journal's audience? Is there an alternative readership that the paper would be more suitable for? For example, a study about renal disease in children might be suitable for either a pediatrics-

Average course completion time: 26 minutes

☑ PEER REVIEW BASICS

☑ HOW TO REVIEW AN ARTICLE

☐ EVALUATION

AVERAGE MODULE COMPLETION TIME: 14 MIN

Overall quality and structure

Title, abstract and key words

Introduction

Materials and Methods

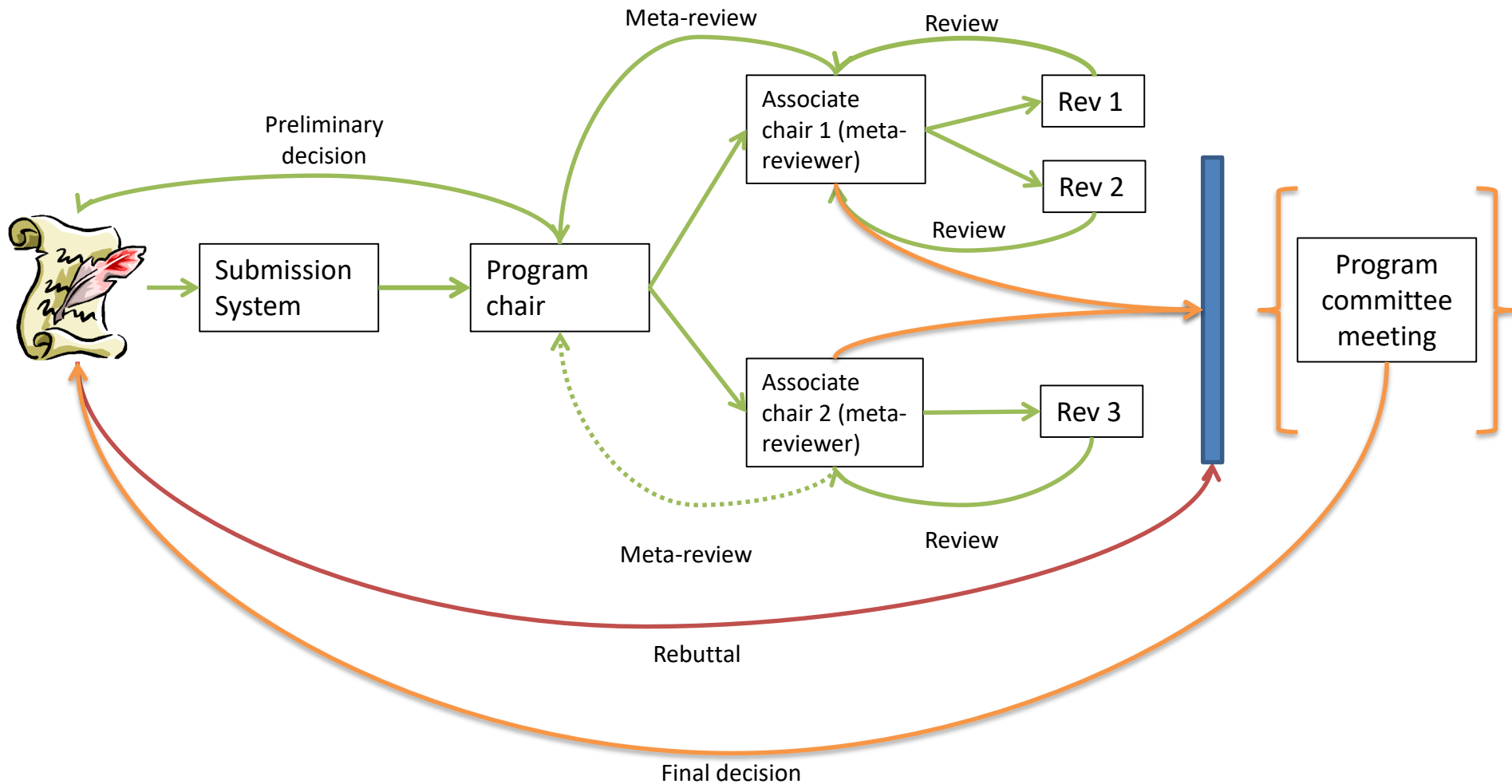Results and figures / tables

Statistics

Discussion

References

Reviewing review articles

Additional slides

Conference: CHI

Journals: Management of IS Quarterly; Information Systems Reserch

Revised manuscript +
response letter
(n times)

Submission System

Review coordinatoor / Managing Editor

Senior Editor (SE)

Associate Editor (AE)

Reccomendation (+review)

Rev 1

Rev 2

Rev 3

Review

Review

Review

Decision
(Reject; Accept;
Major revisions)