Journal of the Medical Library Association

Peer Reviewer Information

Review Form

Reviewers for the *Journal of the Medical Library Association* (*JMLA*) are asked to complete a form containing four free-text fields (*denotes required field):

Would this manuscript appeal to a wide segment of *JMLA* readers and make an important contribution to the health sciences library and information science literature?*

Briefly summarize the major strengths and weaknesses of the manuscript.*

Specific comments to the authors (please enumerate):*

Confidential comments to the editor (e.g., concerns about conflicts of interest, research misconduct, or plagiarism):

Reviewers also have the option of uploading files for the editor and/or authors to consult.

Reviewer Recommendation

Reviewers are asked to select one of the following recommendations:

- Accept Submission: The manuscript should be accepted as is with no further revisions.
- Revisions Required: Revisions should be required before a final decision can be made, but the revised manuscript need not be seen again by the reviewers. Akin to "minor revisions required."
- Resubmit for Review: Revisions should be required before a final decision can be made, and the revised manuscript should be seen again by the reviewers. Akin to "major revisions required."
- Decline Submission: Critical flaws in the premise, methodology, analysis, reporting, or conclusions should prevent further consideration of the manuscript for publication.
- Submit Elsewhere: The manuscript is not a good fit to the scope of the JMLA and should not be further considered for publication.

Reviewer Guidelines

Reviewers are provided with the following guidelines in the *JMLA* system.

Conducting the Review

We suggest adopting the following approach to performing an excellent review:

- Consult *JMLA*'s [Focus and Scope](#) and [Author Guidelines](#) to understand expectations for the work we publish. Note the review form (above) to see how your review should be structured.
- Skim the manuscript. Scan each section, get a feel for the writing style, and view the information shown in tables and figures.

- Perform a first deep read of the manuscript using the questions below as a guide. Take notes on the manuscript's originality, strengths and weaknesses, readability, and overall structure. Also note how the authors could address any weaknesses in their manuscript.
- Perform a second deep read of the manuscript. Identify any smaller issues not caught in your first read and evaluate whether the manuscript as a whole is cohesive and makes a solid contribution to the literature.
- Compose a summary statement describing the manuscript's major strengths and weaknesses and a list of specific comments to the author noting necessary revisions.

Questions to Ask During the Review

When reviewing a manuscript, provide specific, enumerated comments. Point out weaknesses or flaws, and when possible provide suggestions for how these can be minimized or overcome. Most comments should be addressed to the authors, but confidential comments can be provided to the editor in cases of special concern. It is appropriate to indicate whether the writing is poor or difficult to understand, but the correction of individual spelling or grammatical errors is not necessary. Consider the following questions as you review a manuscript, noting that not every question needs to be answered:

Introduction/Background

- Does the introduction/background introduce the topic of the work described in manuscript by placing it in context in a concise manner?
- Do the authors provide a compelling rationale for why they performed the work?
- Do the authors describe the purpose of their work, including clearly stated objectives?

Methods/Case Presentation

- Are the methods fully and clearly described? Is sufficient detail provided to allow others to replicate the work?
- Are the measures valid (i.e., accurately measure what they are intended to measure) and reliable (i.e., consistent across time, items, and/or researchers)?
- Are there potential sources of bias (e.g., recall, selection, observer, or confirmation bias) that could influence the results?

Results/Case Presentation

- Do the results directly speak to the objectives described in the introduction/background section?
- Do the results described in the text match the information shown in the figures and tables?
- Are the data interpreted in a meaningful manner?
- Are the statistical analyses performed and presented appropriately?

Figures and Tables

- Do the figures and/or tables effectively and efficiently visualize the information?

Discussion

- Do the authors draw conclusions from the results instead of simply restating the results?
- Are the conclusions justified by the results or do they overreach the results?
- Do the authors reflect upon previous literature and explain how their findings advance the field's knowledgebase and/or practice?
- Do the authors describe limitations of their work and areas for future research?

Writing

- Is the writing clear, direct, and succinct?
- Are there areas of the text that the authors should clarify, elaborate upon, or omit?

References

- Are the references relevant and reasonably recent?
- Are the authors missing any pertinent references or body of literature?

Data sharing

- Do the authors include a data availability statement describing where and how the data can be accessed (note that placeholders for digital object identifiers [DOIs], uniform resource locators [URLs], etc., are acceptable at this stage)?

Overall

- What are the major strengths and weaknesses of the manuscript?
- Can you make clear connections between the work's context, objectives, methods and results, and conclusions?

Editorial Decision-Making

The editor considers the balance of the reviewers' comments and recommendations as well as their own opinions of the manuscript when making a decision. When an editorial decision is made, reviewers will receive a copy of the decision email containing all peer reviewers' comments on the manuscript. Reviewers are encouraged to carefully read the other reviewers' comments as a learning opportunity to improve the quality of their future reviews.

Re-reviewing a Manuscript

Regardless of a reviewers' recommendation, they may be asked to re-review a revised version of the manuscript. In this case, reviewers should check that the authors have sufficiently alleviated their original concerns and evaluate the revised manuscript for any problems that might have been introduced in the revision process.

Reviewer Acknowledgment

We sincerely thank our reviewers for their time and thoughtfulness in helping vet and improve the quality of work published in *JMLA*. Reviewers will be publicly acknowledged in the April issue of *JMLA* on an annual basis. Reviewers are also encouraged to claim scholarly credit for their reviews in Publons.

Additional Resources on Peer Review

Akers K. Being critical and constructive: a guide to peer reviewing for librarians [editorial]. J Med Libr Assoc. 2017 Jan;105(1):1–3. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5195/jmla.2017.100.

Culley T. How to evaluate a manuscript critically: 12 questions to ask yourself [Internet]. Publons [4 Apr 2017; cited 14 May 2020]. <https://publons.com/blog/how-to-critically-evaluate-a-manuscript-12-questions-you-should-always-ask-yourself/>.

Publons Academy. Learn to peer review with confidence: peer review training course [Internet]. The Academy [2020; cited 14 May 2020]. <https://publons.com/community/academy/>.

Wilkinson J. 12 steps for writing a review [Internet]. Social Science Space [8 Nov 2017; cited 14 May 2020]. <https://www.socialsciencespace.com/2017/11/12-tips-writing-peer-review/>.