



Atrocious Paper Reviews

They may be bad, but together we can make them worse

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- To share examples of infuriating reviews to motivate your reviewing in future.
- To share best practice in how to wind up conference programme chairs, journal editors, and the reviewing community.
- To provide food for thought



How to write an awful review

- You are asked for advice on how to be a truly atrocious reviewer and how to write a truly awful review (or even a set of them, or suite of them across multiple venues)
- Generate a “how to” list, peppering your lists with proof-of-concept examples where possible (which can be related orally)

- You are asked for advice on how to irritate a programme committee via your response to review comments (these may be either in the paper, by means of solicited rebuttals or responses, or by other channels)
- Generate a “how to” list, peppering your lists with proof-of-concept examples where possible (which can be related orally)

- You are asked for advice on how to be a truly awful programme chair.
- Generate a “how to” list, peppering your lists with proof-of-concept examples where possible (which can be related orally)

- I received a paper for a conference on topic T by an eminent author, A from research institute R1.

The paper was 18 pages; topic T was only mentioned on the last page. The previous 17 pages described a model of WWW (that wasn't a patch on WWW-1, WWW-2, or any of the standard models). The mention of T was to show an example of the use of the model. A theorem was 'proved' that contradicted a result in a paper published in the previous year's instance of the conference, with no mention of the previous year's result (A had been at the conference). The proof was an unformatted paragraph of English text. There was no argument that the model presented was particularly apt for reasoning about topic T.

I rejected the paper out of hand, for not being on topic T, and where topic T was mentioned incidentally, not making appropriate references and not explaining why the previous paper was wrong.

The other two reviewers were eminent individuals from research institutes R2 and R3. They both gave very brief reviews stating the paper was a 'must accept'.

The conference chair called me up to beg me to change my mind. He was not able to argue with my points, but was only able to assert the eminence of author A and the reviewers from R2 & R3. Eventually he decided to over-rule me and the paper was accepted.

Behind it all: a cosy cartel between R1, R2 and R3.

- A paper came back with BBD (on an A-D scale), with the D reviewer starting with:

"I do not believe in genetic algorithms." Not only did they not rule themselves out of the reviewing process (for this paper, at least), they became a "champion" to have the paper rejected. The other 2 reviewers with their "weak accept" signals did not put up a fight, and the paper went down the drain.

Another (the same?) paper came with the comment: "the authors can present the results, but not their conclusions" (!?)