

EMBLEMATICA

GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATORS

GENERAL

Thank you for agreeing to evaluate an article submitted to *Emblematica*. Our journal could not function without peer review, and your contribution is both essential and greatly appreciated. Our assessors play a vital role in assisting the editors to make a decision about whether to accept submissions; in the event that we decide not to accept an article, your judgment is especially important, because it provides reassurance to the authors that our decision is not arbitrary or based extraneous considerations, but is the outcome of a rigorous and fair process. This set of guidelines is intended to assist our evaluators in their work, and we welcome your comments on how it can be improved. Comments should be addressed to the Editors in Chief, Tamar Cholcman and Pedro Germano Leal, at contact@emblematicajournal.com.

HOW OUR PEER-REVIEW SYSTEM WORKS

Emblematica uses a “double blind peer review process.” What this means in practice is that when a submission is received, it is first read by the Editors in Chief, who then invites two readers to assess it on the basis of their expertise in the particular area of the submission. Before the submission is sent to the assessors, the author’s name and affiliation are removed, but there is little that can be done in cases where authors self-identify (for example, in the notes or in the text), and we recognize that assessors may in any case form their own hypotheses about authorial identity. The process is intended, however, to ensure that as much as possible, the assessors’ reports are at arms’ length from any personal considerations.

Once both readers’ reports are received, the Editors in Chief makes a provisional decision (see more below on the types of decisions that we make and records it, together with the two readers’ reports, in a document in which the two reports are identified as being from “Reader A” and “Reader B” respectively. This is the first draft of the decision that will be sent to the authors. That draft is then sent to the other editors together with the text of the submission and its accompanying figures, and they are asked to respond to the provisional decision. The two readers are identified in the accompanying e-mail but their identities are kept in strict confidence by the editors and are never communicated to the author. If the author eventually wishes to acknowledge your contributions by name in a footnote, you will always be consulted about whether you wish your identity to be known.

Once a final decision is reached, the draft document is revised to reflect it and the Editors in Chief sends the decision to the author.

TYPES OF EDITORIAL DECISIONS ABOUT SUBMISSIONS

As a reader for *Emblematica*, you may find it useful to know what decisions the editors typically make about submissions. These generally fall into the following categories:

1. Provisional acceptance subject to revision

This decision applies in the case of submissions that are already publishable or nearly so, and where minor revisions only are suggested by the reviewers and required by the editors. “Minor revisions” include such things as correction of facts, names, titles, and dates; conformity to house style; minor points of substance (e.g. expansion or contraction of a relatively small portion of the submission); and so forth.

2. Invitation to revise and resubmit

When the revisions are so extensive as to require a fundamental rethinking of a significant portion of the article or a shift in orientation, or where there are clear deficiencies in the standard of scholarship that prevent immediate acceptance but seem able to be corrected, the editors may offer an author the opportunity to decide whether or not to revise and resubmit the text. In cases where it seems probable that the article, if successfully revised, will be of an acceptable standard, the resubmitted version will be

read and approved (or not) by the editors alone. In cases where it is uncertain whether even a fully revised article will be acceptable, the editors normally advise the author that the revised text will have to be re-read by the original assessors. In that case, you can expect to be asked for your view on the revised version at some point. Revision and resubmission is the most frequent category of initial decision, with a high percentage of revised articles ultimately being accepted.

3. Rejection

In cases where it seems improbable that even very substantial revision could produce a publishable text, the editors will normally advise the author that they are unable to accept the article for publication in *Emblematica*. In some cases, this may be the result of subject choice, since not all submissions are appropriate for *Emblematica*; in others, it may simply be the view of the editors that no revision could salvage the article.

PRODUCING THE MOST USEFUL READER'S REPORT POSSIBLE

In producing your report, please keep the categories of decision in mind. We strongly encourage you to make an overall recommendation corresponding to one of those categories, because that is very helpful to the editors and ultimately to the author. In all cases where an article may in your view eventually be of publishable standard, we ask that you provide specific and constructive guidance to the author on exactly how, in your view, he or she should revise the submission. Typically, such advice takes the form of suggestions for correction, clarification, expansion or reduction, strengthening through the use of additional evidence, bibliographical information about other useful sources with which the author seems unfamiliar, and so on.

It may be helpful to ask yourself the following questions as you prepare to write your report:

1. Is this submission publishable, or nearly so? (*Expected outcome: provisional acceptance*)
 - a. If so, what revisions are needed?
2. If not, can it be made publishable? (*Expected outcome: revise and resubmit*)
 - a. If so, how? What does the author most need to do?
3. If not, why not? In other words, what fundamental deficiencies are present, and why does it seem unlikely that they can be corrected? (*Expected outcome: rejection*)

Length and format

Please send your report either in the body of an e-mail addressed to the Editors in Chief or in a standard word-processing document (e.g., Microsoft Word) as an attachment to such an e-mail. Most good readers' reports run between 500 and 1000 words, though we set no overall limit on length. While the authors always welcome a detailed list of corrections (e.g., to style, spelling or syntax, facts, names, titles, and dates, or mistranslation), we do not demand it of you. In cases where the author's first language is not English, we ask that you not focus on that aspect of the article; if the scholarship is of good enough quality, the Editors in Chief will work with the author to improve the English. ***We normally ask that you take no more than a month to evaluate the article; if you do need more time, please consult the Editors in Chief before accepting.***

Pitfalls to avoid at all costs

Because you will have been chosen on the basis of your expert knowledge of the subject, it will be normal for you to have your own views on the topic at hand. We do, however, expect our reviewers to remain objective and to word their criticisms as constructively and civilly as they would wish criticism of their own submissions to be worded. We encourage vigorous scholarly debate on important subjects. If your views differ, by all means say so and explain why you disagree with the author's interpretation, and please give consideration to writing a rebuttal on the same topic for a future volume of *Emblematica*. Please avoid the temptation, though, to frame your suggestions on the basis of how to rewrite the article so that it would correspond more closely to the article you yourself might have written on this topic.