



AHRC Audio Slide-Show Transcription

Peer Review Interview 2

What does it mean to be a Peer Reviewer?

This audio slide-show features interviews with:

Dr Tom Wakeford, Edinburgh University

Dr Jo Angouri, University of the West of England, Bristol

Dr Owain Jones, Countryside and Community Research Institute

Narrator:

At the recent 'Follow the Members' Peer Review Event, members of the AHRC's Peer Review College talked about what it means to be a Peer Reviewer.

Interviewees introduce themselves:

Tom Wakeford from Edinburgh University. Jo Angouri from the University of the West of England, Bristol. Owain Jones from the Countryside and Community Research Institute.

There now follows a conversation between the three interviewees, each paragraph represents a different comment:

Fundamentally for me it's about in a way shaping the area you're in, so when you're reviewing general papers you can I say I don't like that one because it's going off in a certain direction. Academia is a lot about co-operation and harmony and things, but there will disputes and very different directions that researchers can go in, clearly if you're a peer reviewer you have the chance to shape which direction your discipline is going in.

For me it's all about passion and enthusiasm and I think, I'm not sure if it is about harmony because I think we learn a lot by actually probing each other in a generally positive way, by actually trying to tease and going into detail. I think for me it's bringing out the best of research and it's this sort of drive and passion and enthusiasm we all have, it's also the learning from each other and the responsibility of the researcher to think about support and do that continuously as you also develop as a person. So for me this is fundamental in my identity as a researcher and in the way I feel I should support what I love and what I'm so passionate and enthusiastic about, the community I belong

to and part of my responsibility, and my responsibility to my discipline, the other researchers, the research community, my institution as a whole.

So I guess my identity is slightly different in that I for the last fifteen years have been kind of a split identity between an academic existence, and working with civil society groups, community groups, third sector you might call it. So I guess for me the Peer Review College is a chance to explore how my colleagues in other bits of the Humanities and Arts interpret how they might shift or not towards something that involves people outside the academy whether that be through their *Impact* statement which you know was very controversial when it was introduced, but also how they exchange, how research can be a dialogue often, and I think that's particularly exciting in the Humanities and Arts because I think the ethos among a lot of arts and humanities researchers is right for it so I'm sort of feeling I can bring something to the party which isn't arts and humanities, it's expertise, but it's more about the dialogue element.

I think that's very exciting what Tom just said, especially with the multidisciplinary and we do live in a very multidisciplinary era and also with making research relevant to the participants, including outside academia, which is also what some of us would feel is part of our responsibility, it's not the same for everybody, depends on what you do and so on, and thinking creatively as to how you break, how we break disciplinary boundaries and also the boundaries between the research aimed at the kind of the rest of society, I think it's tremendously important. I think part of the Peer Review process is in supporting and learning from each other and seeing how good practice could then spread across disciplines.

And I think the exciting thing that's happening that we've learnt today is that there's going to be these newsletters and blogs that will allow that conversation to go beyond us in this meeting today but also beyond the college and so it becomes a whole disciplinary, not even disciplinary – a whole sector, a community, a multidisciplinary community.

I think we need to recognise that within the Arts and Humanities, different disciplines will have different peer review needs and different cultures and also different extents and ways that they can have impact and so some disciplines and some research activities really lend themselves to working with communities but in other instances it's not so straightforward. So it's definitely a sort of plurality of needs and expectations and I think reviewers have to recognise that and also that the multidisciplinary thing is very strong now but good multidisciplinary research still rests on having good single disciplinary research, that is the core which it builds from.

Absolutely, that's how this process of learning from each other and how the College members can play an important role in simulating good practice in actually having seen something that worked in one area and then reviewing something that you may suggest, that's the sort of plurality, yes I totally agree.

The multidisciplinary or interdisciplinarity perhaps is acute for such a broad remit in terms of disciplines as the Peer Review College has, but it also is an opportunity that I certainly don't have where I work in a sort of health and well-being bit of the university because I'm talking to Medieval historians and that's quite hard to do in our discipline-bound academic life, so I think it's also a fantastic multidisciplinary journey.