

## EDITORIAL

### Functions of the review article within scientific discourse

In the pre-digital/pre-internet age, when access to primary and secondary sources of scientific literature was not so facile as it is today, the type of Review Article which mainly presented a description of published research on a selected topic, classified in an appropriate manner with a commentary by the author, served an important purpose in enabling entrants to a particular field of research, to obtain a good overview of the topic. This type of article was more in the nature of a survey than a review.

With the availability of search engines such as Google Scholar and Science Direct among others, this type of Review Article has lost much of its value. However, it has to be conceded that they continue to be written by scientists and published by some journals.

The type of Review Article that is of most value today, is one written by an expert in the specific area of the review, who would not only direct the reader to the important primary literature on the topic, but also provide critical insights into the current state of knowledge, relating it to fundamental scientific principles,

particularly highlighting/resolving contradictory or opposing points of view in the literature, and also focus on gaps in knowledge that would be fruitful areas for research in the future.

An important difference in the decision-making process of an editorial board with regard to Review Articles versus Research Articles is that not only the content, but the standing of the authors with respect to their expertise is also evaluated. In other words, the Review Article needs to be *authoritative*. Thus, in order to evaluate their expertise, some journals require the authors to list a specified number of papers published by them which are related most closely to the topic under review, along with their proposal to write a Review Article for the journal. Similarly, the JNSF requires authors of Review Articles to have had a substantial leadership in research supported by a publication track record in the areas covered by the review. It is to be noted that the term “areas covered by the review” is interpreted here in a narrow sense, as being closely related to the topic of the review.

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