

1 **It's time for a customer satisfaction service for scientific journals**

2

3 **Catarina C. Ferreira <sup>1,2\*</sup> & Miguel Delibes-Mateos <sup>3</sup>**

4 <sup>1</sup> Department of Conservation Biology, UFZ - Helmholtz-Centre for Environmental  
5 Research, Leipzig, Germany

6 <sup>2</sup> Department of Biology, Trent University, Peterborough, Canada

7 <sup>3</sup> Departamento de Biología Vegetal y Ecología, Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla,  
8 Spain

9

10 **\*Corresponding author:** Catarina C. Ferreira, Email: [catferreira@gmail.com](mailto:catferreira@gmail.com)

11

12 **Abstract:**

13 We argue that dismissal of scientific papers due to editorial misconduct is a  
14 growing point of contention between scientists and academic publishers. Hence, a  
15 system that helps researchers guide their choices on where to publish based on  
16 criteria related to transparent editorial practices is highly desirable. We hereby  
17 propose the creation of an online platform that allows researchers to rank  
18 scientific journals collectively based on their peer-review experiences. Such a  
19 platform could follow similar systems currently available to customers to rate  
20 products (for example, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) or [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)). By providing  
21 a journal ranking system based on authors' recommendations and satisfaction  
22 scores, this platform would offer major benefits, from reducing the influence of

23 Journal Impact Factors to increasing journal editorial accountability, and  
24 promoting full disclosure of often elusive or inaccessible peer-review criteria and  
25 standards.

26

27 **Main text:**

28 Scholarly journals make Herculean efforts to process a mounting number of article  
29 submissions in a timely manner whilst ensuring the publication of the most  
30 relevant research. Although we researchers praise journals that privilege scientific  
31 integrity and significance, evidence suggests that this may not always be the case,  
32 thus contributing to author dissatisfaction and a growing chasm between  
33 academics and journals (1). Here, we contend that a system that allows researchers  
34 to rank journals collectively based on their peer-review experiences would help  
35 bring the billion-dollar publishing industry closer to its main workforce and end  
36 consumers. We propose an online platform akin to others currently available to  
37 customers to rate products based upon peer recommendations and satisfaction  
38 scores (e.g. [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) or [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)). Such a system would  
39 provide researchers with a formal feedback mechanism on editorial practices, thus  
40 offering complementary criteria for authors when deciding which journal to  
41 submit their research. As a consequence, this system would reduce the outsized  
42 influence Journal Impact Factors have on science (2). Moreover, by allowing  
43 researchers to publicly denounce editorial misconduct and malpractices,  
44 discrimination, or lack of transparency, the new system would increase journal  
45 editorial accountability, and promote full disclosure of often elusive or inaccessible  
46 peer-review criteria and standards (3). It would also yield important information

47 on review accuracy and quality, manuscript formatting complexity, and real  
48 processing times. Since scientific articles can only be submitted to one journal at a  
49 time, it is crucial that researchers have access to differential indicators of journal  
50 performance and reputation to ensure they make the most informed decisions.

51

## 52 **Acknowledgments:**

53 We thank John E. Fa for providing comments to an earlier draft of this letter.  
54 Catarina Ferreira is supported by a Marie Curie Outgoing International Fellowship  
55 for Career Development (PIOF-GA- 2013-621571) within the 7th Framework  
56 Programme of the European Union. M. Delibes-Mateos is supported by V Plan  
57 Propio de Investigación of the University of Seville, Spain.

58

## 59 **References:**

60 <sup>1</sup> A. Fyfe *et al.*, “Untangling Academic Publishing: a history of the relationship  
61 between commercial interests, academic prestige and the circulation of research”  
62 (2017); <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.546100>

63 <sup>2</sup> E. Callaway, *Nature* **535**, 210–211 (2016).

64 <sup>3</sup> C. Ferreira *et al.*, *Biological Reviews* **91**, 597–610 (2016).

65

66

67