

Peer Review Meeting

Chair & Session Reporter: Stefan Groesser

Location: Athens, Greece

Date: 22/7/2008

Abstract

The evaluation of the current quality of the reviews and the review system is based on personal experiences of the participants. The chair of the meeting suggests to address the issue in the policy council (perhaps in combination with the development of the strategy) and to establish a working group to investigate the issue further. Open questions and ideas are provided.

General

On Tuesday, July 22nd, from 10:45 – 11:25, the fourth “peer review dialog” session welcomed 10 participants amongst which were the president, the president elect, members of the policy council, thread chairs and reviewers (list below; some roles in personal union). After briefly reviewing the main topics of last year’s report, several topics were discussed.

1. Quality of the reviewer stock

The opinion of a fraction of the participants (e.g., thread chairs) is that the quality of the reviewer is on average high and acceptable. Moreover, the average feedback has a positive tone and embeds a learning philosophy. A second fraction of the participants, on the other side, questions the average quality of the reviews (e.g., a short two-line-review with no useable advice for improvement). The reason is speculated to be that there are several people in the reviewer stock that decrease the average quality of the reviews. It was briefly discussed, if it should also be possible to lay off reviewers creating an outflow to the reviewer stock.

Remaining questions are:

- How do people become part of the reviewer stock? How are reviewers selected?
- Who manages ~~of~~ the reviewer stock currently? And who will manage the stock in future with the possible consideration of criteria-based inflow and outflow?
- Suggestion: a working group should assess the current state of reviewer stock and quality.

2. Quality of a Review

What constitutes a good review? Basically, it was agreed that there will always be a random distribution and a significant improvement of the quality will be costly. A comment was that the thread chairs have to cope with the current “random” situation. A discussion ensued which resulted in the idea that a detailed review sheet, which is more detailed than the existing one, could be developed.

- Suggestion: a working group should assess the need for a more detailed review sheet and eventually elaborate the existing.

3. Support to Improve the Quality of Authors Contribution

The idea was to provide a second review during the presentation at the conference. Possibly the session reporter could take on this task. The major opinion was that this idea is rather difficult to implement and the possible benefit is questionable.

Another idea was to provide an information sheet about what a good conference contribution includes. This paper could be uploaded to the website as good practise. This would be similar to the available sheet about the dos and don'ts of a poster presentation.

→ Suggestion: a working group could develop a form about the basic requirements of a conference contribution/paper (a first draft is taken from the Student chapter and the organizers of the PhD Colloquium; provided in the appendix; acknowledgement goes to the Student chapter)

4. Publications of Low Quality in the Proceedings

The existence of low quality papers in the proceedings is of concern to several participants. Currently, all accepted and presented papers are archived at the society's conference website which could negatively influence the public perception of System Dynamics. Several ideas have been discussed:
First idea: The society publishes only an abstract of the low quality papers.
Second idea: Several high quality papers are selected for publication in a special issue of the SDR; or a separate publication organ is created (e.g., a conference book). The other conference contributions will only appear as an abstract on the website.

→ Suggestion: a working group could develop a current understanding of what constitutes a good paper and develop a proposal to the policy council to take the issue.

After Meeting Considerations and Discussion

During the conference, it became clear to the meeting chair and others that the peer review meeting is almost unknown among the conference participants. The current perception of the issue "conference peer review" is low. The question is, if this is a good status or rather worrisome. What is the quality level which the society wants to achieve? This is a fundamental element of the strategy of the society and hence part of the discussion in the policy council.

→ Suggestion: the issue of peer review has to be considered in the strategy development of the society (chaired by Kim Warren).

Next steps:

The next steps consider the process or actions that will be following to the peer review meeting. How will the issues discussed in this report be pursued? And who will take upon this task?

→ **Suggestion: a dedicated working group initiated by the policy council**

Possible Members of the Working group

Chair:	Martin Schaffernicht
Part 1:	Society Office
Part 2:	last two program chairs
Part 3:	thread chairs
Part 4:	authors

Appendix:

SUGGESTIONS WHEN PREPARING A CONTRIBUTION

- Clearly define your research question and the objectives of your work. Convince people that the problem you are exploring is of great interest to them and to you.
- Place your research into context. In many cases you will already be able to place your research into the context of literature. What questions arise out of the context and literature study?
- Explain the methods which you intend to use for your research, e.g., for data collection, analysis. System dynamics may not be the only method used.
- Convince the audience that system dynamics is an adequate methodology for the research questions you are addressing, i.e., prove that you are exploring a clear feedback theory. Also prove that you are working on a dynamic problem.
- Take an adequate amount of time, and steps, to describe your model and the main feedback loops which constitute it. Name loops.
- Show behaviour over time of important variables (real-world behaviour and/or your hypotheses). This helps clarify that you investigate a dynamic problem and feedback theory.
- Define your model boundaries, i.e. what is included and excluded from feedback. Model boundaries may be temporal, causal, and conceptual.
- Highlight the main contributions of your paper. How does it differentiate from previous academic work? What is new? Why? New insights, maybe even first results?

These suggestions are strongly based on George Richardson's guidelines for model conceptualization. Further information can be found in:

- Randers, Jørgen: Guidelines for Model Conceptualization, in: Elements of the System Dynamics Method, and in: Richardson, George P.: Modelling for Management.
- Richardson, George P. and Alexander L. Pugh III: Introduction to System Dynamics Modeling with DYNAMO, chapter 2.
- Saeed, Khalid (1992): Slicing a Complex Problem for System Dynamics Modeling, in System Dynamics Review, 8(3), 251-261.

List of Participants of the Meeting

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