

# EDITORIAL POLICIES OF *THE IJCIR*

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*The International Journal of Computing and ICT Research (IJCIR)* is published by The Faculty of Computing and Information Technology at Makerere University. It is headed by an Editor-in-Chief and area Editors below. The Area Editors form the Editorial Advisory Board and are appointed by the Editor-in-Chief. The policies and practices of the *Journal* are established by the Editor-in-Chief with the advice of Editorial Advisory Board.

## ***Scope of Publication***

*The Journal* strives to publish original work of the highest quality from Africa and other places that embrace basic information communication technology (ICT) that will offer significant contributions to the African scientific research and development. Apart from general importance, scientific quality, and rigor, the major criteria for acceptance are: originality; definitive mechanistic information; and interest to a broad readership. The *Journal* publishes articles that strive to understand integrative function through innovative model simulations and theory. Only scientifically sound articles with novelty or breadth of ideas will be accepted.

*Types of Articles.* The *Journal* publishes regular and research articles, book reviews and sometimes, if it is of value to the readers, communications, and letters to the Editor. Articles are limited to a maximum of 20 single spaced pages – font type Times New Roman, size 10. Communications and letters to the Editor should be organized and prepared like regular articles, except that they short communications, no more than two printed pages that comment upon, criticize, or interpret findings published in the *Journal*. The acceptability of communications and letters to the Editor are subject to the same reviewing and editorial procedures that apply to regular articles, as described under *Review Process and Editorial Decision Making*.

## ***Review Process and Editorial Decision Making***

Solicited Commentaries and Editorials usually will be reviewed only by the Editor-in-Chief. Book reviews will also have one or more outside reviewers. All other manuscripts are subject to a uniform and rigorous review. After a manuscript is received, it is first evaluated by the editors. Manuscripts that are deemed to be inappropriate for the *Journal*, and manuscripts of poor quality or with serious deficiencies, will be returned to the author(s) after this initial review by the editors. For manuscripts that pass this initial review will go through a second layer of review from a list of possible expert reviewers drawn up by the Editor-in-Chief.

In the case of Letters to the Editor, the letter will be sent to the authors of the work that is commented upon, with a request that they provide a written response. The letter plus the response then will be subject to review — usually by the reviewers of the original article(s). Based on this review, the Journal may publish the Letter to the Editor with or without a response.

The Editor-in-Chief and the Editorial Advisory Board members may from time to time suggest to a scientist that he/she should submit a manuscript on a specific topic to the *Journal*. Such suggestions do not imply that the manuscript will receive a favorable review.

Area Editors and possible reviewers are generally contacted by email to ascertain their availability as reviewers of the manuscript. Two (sometimes three) expert reviewers are selected by the Area Editor, and copies of the manuscript are sent to them electronically. The Editor or reviewers may be requested to send to the Journal Secretariat a preliminary evaluation of the manuscript's importance and originality, of the quality of its presentation, and of the time required to review it. If both the Area Editor and reviewers give a manuscript a low score, the manuscript will not be reviewed further, but will be returned to the author(s) with an explanatory letter. Otherwise, the manuscript will be reviewed according to the standards of the *Journal*. This procedure is intended to expedite decisions on manuscripts that are deemed unlikely to compete successfully for space in the *Journal*, and to provide guidance to the authors of these manuscripts.

Manuscripts that receive a complete review are carefully evaluated by the Editor-in-Chief. Decisions are made at the discretion of the Editor-in-Chief and the Editorial Board, who are guided not only by their own judgment of, and the reviewers' advice on, the manuscript's scientific merit, novelty, and mechanistic insights, but also by its appropriateness to the *Journal* and by the number of articles currently under consideration or in press. If reviewers disagree strongly about the scientific merit of a manuscript, the Area Editors may request the advice of an additional reviewer or the Editor-in-Chief.

Authors are informed of editorial decisions by email. While manuscripts are assigned to Area Editors, decision letters are signed by the Journal Secretariat. All correspondence should be addressed to the Journal Secretariat.

Reviewers' comments are always sent to the author. Correspondence concerning a manuscript will be seen by some other persons other than the author, as a copy of each review usually is sent to the Editor-in-Chief. A copy of the editors' letter advising the author that an article has been accepted or declined, or that it may be resubmitted in revised form, is kept on record at the Journal Secretariat.

*Confidentiality.* The peer review process rests on the assumption that all manuscripts will be treated as privileged information, which cannot be divulged to other parties. A

reviewer may request additional advice from another party, subject to the general principle of confidentiality and notification of the editorial office.

*Reviewer Anonymity.* Except when a reviewer explicitly wishes to be identified, the editors will maintain the anonymity of the reviewers. It is similarly assumed that reviewers will not identify themselves to authors without informing the editors. The editors discourage such disclosures.

### ***Acceptance, Revision, Rejections, and Rebuttals***

In nearly all cases, articles are accepted on condition of being revised. Usually, manuscripts are either accepted provisionally, pending suitable revisions; returned for major revisions and subsequently re-evaluated; or rejected. In a few cases, authors of rejected manuscripts are invited to resubmit a new or revised manuscript, contingent upon their being able to satisfy the major criticisms of the reviewers by revision, or by additional materials and consequent rewriting. Revised manuscripts are all carefully reexamined and may be reviewed again, possibly by new reviewers. In all cases only one major revision of a manuscript is permitted.

The revised manuscript must be received in the Journal Secretariat within three months of the date of the decision letter. Revised manuscripts that are received at a later date will be treated as new submissions, unless the Secretariat has been notified in writing (email is preferable) of the delay and agreed in writing to receive the revised manuscript at a later date.

All revised and resubmitted manuscripts should be accompanied by a letter, by the major author, that details how the manuscript was modified in light of the reviewers' comments. A carefully crafted resubmission letter that explicitly addresses each of the issues raised by the reviewers will facilitate, and usually accelerate, the review and editorial decision making. In case of addition or deletion of authors to or from the manuscript, all authors (including those deleted) must sign the resubmission letter or in some other way notify the Secretariat in writing that they agree with this decision. If this information is not provided, the manuscript will be returned.

If authors disagree with comments made by reviewers, their reasons should be stated in the resubmission letter. Authors should note, however, that their responses to the reviews usually are disclosed to the reviewers. If the editors find the authors' response to be inappropriate, the letter and the manuscript will be returned.

In case a rejected manuscript is resubmitted without an explicit invitation to do so, the manuscript usually will be returned without further review. In exceptional cases, the original reviewers may be asked whether the revision appears sufficient to overcome their initial reservations. The reviewers will base that determination solely on the resubmission letter and the abstract of the revised manuscript. A positive preliminary determination will endanger a full review.

In the case of *Letters to the Editor*, the publication of a letter does not commit the *Journal* to publish a reply.

*Communications between Authors and the Secretariat.* Questions regarding the status of a manuscript are handled by the Secretariat staff. To keep the office functioning smoothly, authors are asked to keep such queries to a minimum, and whenever possible to communicate via [email](#). In any case, the Secretariat will provide information only to the designated corresponding author, and will not provide extensive details (such as the status of review process or the expected time of decision).

More complex problems concerning the manuscript should be directed to the Area Editors through the Secretariat. Such inquiries should be in writing ([email](#) is acceptable). The Secretariat will maintain a complete file of the communications relating to each manuscript. To ensure consistency and fairness, the Area Editor usually will discuss the authors' concerns with the Editor-in-Chief, and possibly also the reviewers before responding to the authors in writing or by telephone, as appropriate.

### ***Manuscripts Submitted by the Editors or Editor-in-Chief***

To avoid concerns of bias in the review of manuscripts submitted by these editors, those manuscripts will be handled by a Guest Editor (usually a member of the Editorial Advisory Board). Manuscripts submitted by close collaborators of the Editors and the Editor-in-Chief will be handled in a similar manner. Manuscripts submitted by members of the Editorial Advisory Board will be treated as any ordinary manuscript.

### ***Time from Submission to Editorial Decision to Publication***

The Secretariat will strive to minimize the time from submission to the first decision. Currently, the median time from the date of submission to the date of the decision letter is about 6 months. The actual time varies widely from manuscript to manuscript. Normally the review process tends to take longer for large and complex manuscripts and manuscripts that are poorly prepared. The *Journal* takes pride in the depth and rigor of the reviews, but reviewers do a voluntary service to the *Journal* (and the authors), and the Secretariat can do no more than remind reviewers when they are tardy.

Articles will be printed as soon as possible after acceptance, but not necessarily in the order of receipt of the final version.

### ***Access to Materials and Data***

As a condition of publication, authors must make unique materials (e.g. computer programs) published in the *Journal*, available upon request by academic researchers; who may use them in their own experiments only. In addition, the source code for all computational methods, apart from commercial software packages, must be made freely available. If requested, these materials must be made available without undue

delay. It would be reasonable if authors of published articles charge a modest amount to cover the cost of producing the materials. If readers have difficulty obtaining materials, they should contact the *Journal's* Secretariat. Author's failure to comply with this condition will preclude future publication in the *Journal*.

## ***Editorial Practices at the IJCIR***

### ***Selecting reviewers***

When a manuscript is submitted, the Secretariat will consider the author suggested area for the manuscript in selecting the Area Editor to send the manuscript to. The Area Editors will select two or more reviewers for the manuscript.

### ***Reviewing the reviews***

The selected reviewers provide a score (ranging from “A” to “F”), Comments to the Authors, and usually also Confidential Comments to the Area Editor. The editors read all the comments to determine whether the scores and the narrative comments are concordant and the comments are informative; in effect, the reviews are rated. The editors then go over the manuscript to form their own evaluation. When the reviewers concur, and the editors agree with their assessment, the situation is simple and the Area Editor forwards the manuscript along with the reviewers’ comments to the Secretariat. The Secretariat makes copies of the comments and writes the acceptance letter to the author(s). Sometimes, however, there is significant divergence in the reviewers’ assessments of a manuscript—scores of “A” and “F” for the same manuscript are not uncommon. Such cases are discussed at length among the editors and sometimes with the Editor-in-Chief. When we cannot identify why the reviewers have such divergent evaluations, we may request the advice of a third (and in a few cases, a fourth) expert. When we can identify the reason(s) for the divergence based on our own evaluation of the manuscript (and reviews), we make the decision without additional reviews.

The most frequent reason for divergence between the reviewers is that the manuscript has the potential to become an important contribution, but that it also has one or more flaws; one reviewer focuses on the potential, the other on the flaw(s). In such cases the editorial decision may be to invite the submission of a revised version of the manuscript. Often, however, the decision is to reject the manuscript but invite the authors to submit a new version (new receipt date and manuscript number)—provided they resolve the reviewers’ major concerns (and address all their other concerns). The resulting manuscript usually will be sent to three reviewers (the two original reviewers, if available, plus a new reviewer) in order to facilitate the editorial decision process. In any case, the invitation to submit a new version of the manuscript is meant seriously; if we do not believe that the new version of the manuscript is likely to fare well in a subsequent review, we do not extend the invitation. Indeed, the acceptance rate for new versions of manuscripts that are submitted after the initial rejection is about twice the overall acceptance rate.

The decision to invite the submission of a new version, rather than a revised version, of the manuscript is based on the editors' assessment of the effort that would be required to resolve the reviewers' concerns. If we find that essential datasets are missing or if the authors need to undertake a major additional analysis of the results—i.e., if the original manuscript was too preliminary: we invite the authors to submit a new manuscript rather than a revised version of the manuscript.

### ***The Role of Supplemental Material***

We encourage authors to make use of the possibility to make some material available as online Supplemental Material. If, for example, the manuscript includes an in-depth analysis of various use of a software or hardware tool, it suffices to include some successful model(s) in the use of those tools in the Supplemental Material, to be available for those experts who are also interested in knowing how to use those tools.

### ***Appropriateness of an article for the Journal: mechanism and models***

Authors, reviewers and editors spend considerable efforts to ascertain whether a manuscript is appropriate for the *IJCIR* and how a manuscript can be revised to accomplish the *Journal's* mission— to publish original cutting edge research in the field of computing and ICT with relevancy to Africa. This expectation and the fact that articles provided will be of high quality and rigorous enough have served the *Journal* well; it also has been a cause for much of the initial popularity of the journal.

In the end, we advise the authors that, the key criterion for whether a manuscript is appropriate for the *Journal* is whether the readers would see things and think differently about the problem after reading the article. If they would, the manuscript would be appropriate. If they would not, no amount of rhetoric and modeling can rescue the manuscript.

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