

Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide

a journal of nineteenth-century visual culture

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Editors' Welcome

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Editors' Welcome

In this issue, for the first time, we publish a response to an article that was published in *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*. We welcome the dialogue and hope that we shall see more of it in forthcoming issues, for we believe the exchange of ideas to be healthy and helpful to the clear formulation of arguments.

In academic publishing, the evaluation process traditionally *precedes* an article's publication and involves a limited number (one to three) of peer reviewers, selected by the editorial board for being authorities in the specialized field, which the article purports to expand. Should the reviewers find that the article warrants publication, it is published, usually with some modifications based on their comments.

Though the peer review process has a long and hallowed history in academic publishing, it is beginning to be questioned and the web, in large part, is responsible for this development. To those who are used to Wikipedia's flexible format and to blogs and Twitter—the traditional review process may well appear too static, secretive, and elitist.

Readers of *The New York Times* may have read, in its August 23 issue, the article by Patricia Cohen entitled "[Scholars Test Web Alternative to Peer Review](#)". The author reports that some humanities scholars today argue that the standard review process should be replaced by a more dynamic, "open," and democratic one that uses, and is inspired by, the internet. The *Shakespeare Quarterly* experimented with just such a process in the preparation of its upcoming fall issue. It posted four submissions online and invited a group of experts to comment on them on the scholarly digital network Media Commons. Others, not invited, could comment as well, after registering on the site. All comments had to be signed. At the closure of the review process, 350 comments had been made by 41 people. On the basis of these comments, the authors revised their essays, after which the editorial board made the final decision to include (or not include) them in the journal.

It is obviously too early to tell the effectiveness of this new process, but already it has advocates and opponents. At the heart of the debate is the question of how knowledge is produced, evaluated, and communicated. *Nature's* 2005 [comparative study of Wikipedia and the online Encyclopaedia Britannica](#), which concluded that the first came close to the second for the accuracy of its science entries, cast some doubt on the traditional model of the single, or limited number of, expert(s) as producer(s) of specialized knowledge and opened the door to the possibility that knowledge may be communally produced.

We, the editors of *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, are not planning to immediately abandon our current, traditional, evaluation process, but we are curious to know your opinion. So, for those of you who are reading this greeting, please drop us a note at [petra.chu\(at\)shu.edu](mailto:petra.chu(at)shu.edu).