CISSE PUBLICATION EDITORIAL POLICIES

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6. **Data Access and Retention:** Authors should provide raw data related to their manuscript for editorial review and must retain such data.

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Details for the above duties, responsibilities and policies to follow

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More details about the CISSE Publications' pre-publicity policy

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General information

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Other contributed articles are not usually peer-reviewed. Nevertheless, articles published in these sections, particularly if they present technical information, may be peer-reviewed at the discretion of the editors.

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Questions about a specific manuscript should be directed to the editor who is handling the manuscript.

Online manuscript review

We ask peer-reviewers to submit their reports via our secure online system by following the link provided in the editor's email.

Criteria for publication

CISSE receives many more submissions than they can publish. Therefore, we ask peer-reviewers to keep in mind that every paper that is accepted means that another good paper must be rejected. To be published in a CISSE publication, a paper should meet four general criteria:

- Provides strong evidence for its conclusions.
- Novel (we do not consider meeting report abstracts and preprints on community servers to compromise novelty).
- Of extreme importance to academics in the specific field.
- Ideally, interesting to researchers in other related disciplines.

In general, to be acceptable, a paper should represent an advance in understanding likely to influence thinking in the field. There should be a discernible reason why the work deserves the visibility of publication in a CISSE publication rather than the best of the specialist journals.

The review process

All submitted manuscripts are read by the editorial staff. To save time for authors and peer-reviewers, only those papers that seem most likely to meet our editorial criteria are sent for formal review. Those papers judged by the editors to be of insufficient general interest or otherwise inappropriate are rejected promptly without external review (although these decisions may be based on informal advice from specialists in the field).

Manuscripts judged to be of potential interest to our readership are sent for formal review, typically to two or three reviewers, but sometimes more if special advice is needed (for example on statistics or a particular technique). The editors then make a decision based on the reviewers' advice, from among several possibilities:

- **Accept**, with or without editorial revisions
- Invite the authors to **revise their manuscript** to address specific concerns before a final decision is reached
- Reject, but indicate to the authors that **further work might justify a resubmission**
- **Reject outright**, typically on grounds of specialist interest, lack of novelty, insufficient conceptual advance or major technical and/or interpretational problems

Reviewers are welcome to recommend a particular course of action, but they should bear in mind that the other reviewers of a particular paper may have different technical expertise and/or views, and the editors may have to make a decision based on conflicting advice. The most useful reports, therefore, provide the editors with the information on which a decision should be based. Setting out the arguments for and against publication is often more helpful to the editors than a direct recommendation one way or the other.

Editorial decisions are not a matter of counting votes or numerical rank assessments, and we do not always follow the majority recommendation. We try to evaluate the strength of the arguments raised by each reviewer and by the authors, and we may also consider other information not available to either party. Our primary responsibilities are to our readers and to the academic community at large, and in deciding how best to serve them, we must weigh the claims of each paper against the many others also under consideration.

We may return to reviewers for further advice, particularly in cases where they disagree with each other, or where the authors believe they have been misunderstood on points of fact. We therefore ask that reviewers should be willing to provide follow-up advice as requested. We are very aware, however, that reviewers are usually reluctant to be drawn into prolonged disputes, so we try to keep consultation to the minimum we judge necessary to provide a fair hearing for the authors.

When reviewers agree to assess a paper, we consider this a commitment to review subsequent revisions. However, editors will not send a resubmitted paper back to the reviewers if it seems that the authors have not made a serious attempt to address the criticisms.

We take reviewers' criticisms seriously; in particular, we are very reluctant to disregard technical criticisms. In cases where one reviewer alone opposes publication, we may consult the other reviewers as to whether s/he is applying an unduly critical standard. We occasionally bring in additional reviewers to resolve disputes, but we prefer to avoid doing so unless there is a specific issue, for example a specialist technical point, on which we feel a need for further advice.

Selecting peer-reviewers

Reviewer selection is critical to the publication process, and we base our choice on many factors, including expertise, reputation, specific recommendations and our own previous experience of a reviewer's characteristics. For instance, we avoid using people who are slow, careless, or do not provide reasoning for their views, whether harsh or lenient.

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Writing the review

The primary purpose of the review is to provide the editors with the information needed to reach a decision but the review should also instruct the authors on how they can strengthen their paper to the point where it may be acceptable. As far as possible, a negative review should explain to the authors the major weaknesses of their manuscript, so that rejected authors can understand the basis for the decision and see in broad terms what needs to be done to improve the manuscript for publication elsewhere. Referees should not feel obliged to provide detailed, constructive advice regarding minor criticisms of the manuscript if it does not meet the criteria for the CISSE publication (as outlined in the letter from the editor when asking for the review). Referees should be aware that authors of declined manuscripts may request that referee comments be transferred to another CISSE publication or presentation where they can be used to determine suitability of publication.

Confidential comments to the editor are welcome, but it is helpful if the main points are stated in the comments for transmission to the authors. The ideal review should answer the following questions:

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- Are the claims novel? If not, which published papers compromise novelty?
- Are the claims convincing? If not, what further evidence is needed?
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- If the manuscript is unacceptable, is the study sufficiently promising to encourage the authors to resubmit?
- If the manuscript is unacceptable but promising, what specific work is needed to make it acceptable?

Other questions to consider

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- Would readers outside the discipline benefit from a schematic of the main result to accompany publication?

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- Have they been fair in their treatment of previous literature?
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- Is the statistical analysis of the data sound, and does it conform to the journal's guidelines?
- Are the reagents generally available?
- Are there any special ethical concerns arising from the use of human or other animal subjects?

An example of a review form: www.cisse.info/pdf/CISSE Review Form.pdf

Timing

CISSE is committed to rapid editorial decisions and publication, and we believe that an efficient editorial process is a valuable service both to our authors and to the scientific community as a whole. We therefore ask reviewers to respond promptly within the number of days agreed. If reviewers anticipate a longer delay than previously expected, we ask them to let us know so that we can keep the authors informed and, where necessary, find alternatives.

Anonymity

We do not release reviewers' identities to authors or to other reviewers, except when reviewers specifically ask to be identified. Unless they feel strongly, however, we prefer that reviewers should remain anonymous throughout the review process and beyond. Before revealing their identities, reviewers should consider the possibility that they may be asked to comment on the criticisms of other reviewers and on further revisions of the manuscript; identified reviewers may find it more difficult to be objective in such circumstances.

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Double blind peer review

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As a matter of policy, we do not suppress reviewers' reports; any comments that were intended for the authors are transmitted, regardless of what we may think of the content. On rare occasions, we may edit a report to remove offensive language or comments that reveal confidential information about other matters. We ask reviewers to avoid statements that may cause needless offence; conversely, we strongly encourage reviewers to state plainly their opinion of a paper. Authors should recognize that criticisms are not necessarily unfair simply because they are expressed in robust language.

The peer-review system

It is editors' experience that the peer-review process is an essential part of the publication process, which improves the manuscripts we publish. Not only does peer review provide an independent assessment of the importance and technical accuracy of the results described, but the feedback from referees conveyed to authors with the editors' advice frequently results in manuscripts being refined so that their structure and logic is more readily apparent to readers.

CISSE publications are appreciative of its peer-reviewers, of whom there are many tens of thousands. It is only by collaboration with our reviewers that editors can ensure that the manuscripts we publish are among the most important in their disciplines of scientific research. We appreciate the time that reviewers devote to assessing the manuscripts we send them, which helps ensure that we publish only material of the very highest quality. In particular, many submitted manuscripts contain large volumes of additional (supplementary) data and other material, which take time to evaluate. We thank our reviewers for their continued commitment to our publication process.

Peer-review publication policies

All contributions submitted to CISSE that are selected for peer-review are sent to at least one, but usually two or more, independent reviewers, selected by the editors. Authors are welcome to suggest suitable independent reviewers and may also request that CISSE excludes one or two individuals, laboratories, governmental agency or business. The journal sympathetically considers such requests and usually honors them, but the editor's decision on the choice of referees is final.

As a condition of agreeing to assess the manuscript, all reviewers undertake to keep submitted manuscripts, associated data, and their own peer review comments confidential, and not to redistribute them without permission from CISSE. If a reviewer seeks advice from colleagues while assessing a manuscript, he or she ensures that confidentiality is maintained and that the names of any such colleagues are provided to the journal with the final report. By this and by other means, CISSE endeavor to keep the content of all submissions confidential until the publication date other than in the specific case of its embargoed press release available to registered journalists. Peer review comments should remain confidential after publication unless the referee obtains permission from the corresponding author of the reviewed manuscript and CISSE publication the comments were delivered to. Although we go to every effort to ensure reviewers honor their promise to ensure confidentiality, we are not responsible for the conduct of reviewers.

Reviewers should be aware that it is our policy to keep their names confidential, and that we do our utmost to ensure this confidentiality. Under normal circumstances, blind peer-review is

protected from legislation. We cannot, however, guarantee to maintain this confidentiality in the face of a successful legal action to disclose identity in the event of a reviewer having written personally derogatory comments about the authors in his or her reports. For this reason as well as for reasons of standard professional courtesy, we request reviewers to refrain from personally negative comments about the authors of submitted manuscripts. Frank comments about the scientific content of the manuscripts, however, are strongly encouraged by the editors.

CORRECTION AND RETRACTION POLICY

We recognize our responsibility to correct errors that we have previously published. Our policy is to consider refutations (readers' criticisms) of primary research papers, and to publish them (in concise form) if and only if the author provides compelling evidence that a major claim of the original paper was incorrect. Refutations are peer-reviewed, and where possible they are sent to the same referees who reviewed the original paper. A copy is usually also sent to the corresponding author of the original paper for signed comments. Refutations are typically published in the Events section of our website or the Correspondence section of the following Edition of the publication, sometimes with a brief response from the original authors. Some submitted refutations are eventually published as retractions by the paper's authors. In both cases, the published refutation or retraction is linked online to the original paper, and the published paper is linked online to the refutation or retraction.

Complaints, disagreements over interpretation and other matters arising should be addressed to the editor of the CISSE publication concerned. Because debates over interpretation are often inconclusive, we do not automatically consider criticisms of review articles or other secondary material, and in the event that we decide to publish such a criticism we do not necessarily consult the original authors. Editorial decisions in such cases are based on considerations of reader interest, novelty of arguments, integrity of the publication record and fairness to the parties involved. Publication may take various forms at the discretion of the editor.

Corrections are published for significant errors in non-peer-reviewed content of the CISSE publications at the discretion of the editors. Readers who have identified such an error should

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Notification of an important error made by the publication that affects the publication record or the scientific integrity of the paper, or the reputation of the authors, or of the publication.

Corrigendum

Notification of an important error made by the author(s) that affects the publication record or the scientific integrity of the paper, or the reputation of the authors or the publication. All authors must sign corrigenda submitted for publication. In cases where coauthors disagree, the editors will take advice from independent peer-reviewers and impose the appropriate amendment, noting the dissenting author(s) in the text of the published version.

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Notification of invalid results. All coauthors must sign a retraction specifying the error and stating briefly how the conclusions are affected, and submit it for publication. In cases where coauthors disagree, the editors will seek advice from independent peer-reviewers and impose the type of amendment that seems most appropriate, noting the dissenting author(s) in the text of the published version.

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