

Sample Review Only – Does Not Relate to An Actual Paper

Below are **two (fictional) paper reviews** that may serve as a guide to your own reviewing style.

First, here is a negative paper review:

This proposal addresses an important issue: the role of social media in disseminating rumours, misinformation, and ‘fake news’ in the context of the recent U.S. presidential election. This is a topic of significant importance and substantial public debate at present, and as such the paper should make an important contribution to the field.

Unfortunately, however, the proposal remains somewhat vague on its central object of study: the boundaries of what the proponents describe as ‘fake news’ are never clearly defined, and it is therefore difficult to assess whether the paper will be able to do its topic justice. For instance, does ‘fake news’ refer only to deliberately manufactured false content, placed into circulation by propagandists in the knowledge that the information contained in such news items is incorrect? Or, does it also include snippets of true, verified information that are placed well out of their original context in order to confuse and misrepresent an issue? It would be useful to at least offer a working definition in order to delimit the scope of the study.

The methods used to study ‘fake news’ here also remain unclear. The authors state that they tracked the dissemination of stories identified as ‘fake news’ on Twitter, but - apart from the definitional problem of what exactly they mean by ‘fake news’ - they also fail to indicate whether such tracking was done by capturing tweets containing relevant keywords and phrases, or tweets containing the URLs where specific ‘fake news’ stories had been posted. Such different methodological choices would clearly have a significant impact on what levels of circulation the study would be able to detect, and at what level of reliability.

These limitations mean that the current study is not yet at the standard required for presentation at an AoIR conference. However, there is a really good idea for a study here, and I would strongly encourage the authors to persevere with this work and submit a new proposal to a future AoIR conference.

Here is a positive paper review:

This proposal addresses an important issue: the role of social media in disseminating rumours, misinformation, and ‘fake news’ in the context of the recent U.S. presidential election. This is a topic of significant importance and substantial public debate at present, and the paper makes an important contribution to the field.

In particular, the authors provide a clear definition of what they mean by ‘fake news’. While their definition is by no means the only possible such definition, as the boundaries of what we mean by ‘fake news’ continue to be hotly debated in scholarly as well as popular discourse, their contribution helps us move towards a more systematic scholarly appraisal of this phenomenon, and is therefore very welcome.

That definition is then operationalised in a clearly described methodological framework which has already generated some very solid data. While the full data gathering and analysis process has not yet concluded, it is already evident that this approach is likely to produce some valuable new insights into the dissemination and reception of ‘fake news’

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content as defined by the authors, and I therefore strongly recommend that this paper be accepted for presentation at the AoIR conference.

Below are **two (fictional) panel reviews** that may serve as a guide to your own reviewing style.

Here is a sample positive panel review:

The panel poses interesting questions that speak directly to the conference theme (in particular, big data studies and knowledge production). Each abstract is compelling, thoughtful, and mines the complex undercurrents of category work. Here are comments on each submission. I would be excited to see each area developed during the talks. Paper 1 promises rich description and better understanding of infrastructural practice. I see an opportunity here, beyond what is in the abstract, to connect this rich fieldwork and interview data back to central theoretical issues. What insights for communication theory spring from the fieldwork? Paper 2 highlights the inadequacy of standard "information literacy" discourses, a much-needed intervention. I would like to see this author's talk address how wiki sites (as those curated by people in cooperation with bots and a strict set of rules) serve as a location for developing new literacies that can be applied outside wiki sites. Paper 3's suggestion that art loses its autonomy once placed in curatorial context is provocative and original. Could artists enfold these long trajectories into their own creative practice, and with what implications? Paper 4's critique of technological behavior-norming raises interesting questions of how technologists can ethically move forward; I would be interested to hear suggestions for technologists' best practices in light of this ethical quandary.

Here is a sample negative panel review:

The panel topic poses interesting questions that speak directly to the conference theme (in particular, big data studies and knowledge production). However the individual papers do not clearly cohere as a panel and not all of them connect to those central questions. Paper 3, for instance, does not seem to talk about big data or knowledge production centrally (at least not as displayed in the abstract). Paper 4 does not appear to offer much original insight on the topic of behavior-norming or relate to the panel's main topics. Finally, Papers 1 and 2 are on projects in the same geographic area and topic, and although they utilize different methods it is not clear how those differences offer unique insights into the topic.