Which peer reviewers voluntarily reveal their identity to authors?
Insights into the consequences of open-identities peer review

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Supplemental material

Anonymous reviewers can sometimes self-identify through metadata in uploaded documents

Signing a review is not the only way a reviewer can self-identify. Reviewers can unintentionally identify themselves to authors when they submit their reviews as MS Word documents or PDFs, or when they submit a version of the author's manuscript on which they have inserted comments (e.g., annotating the manuscript PDF). These documents often contain a reviewer's name, initials or employer (e.g., university name) embedded in the document properties. In a sample of unsigned reviews from 2013 to 2015, 64% (18 of 28) of those submitted their review as a PDF, and 81% (54 of 66) of those that submitted their review as an MS Word file, included information identifying the reviewer in the document's properties. Only 22% (7 of 32) of annotated manuscripts - those manuscripts for which the reviewer added comments to the manuscript PDF they downloaded from ScholarOne Manuscripts - had information identifying the reviewer's identity. Fortunately, the fields identifying reviewer identities are removed from the properties section of PDF and Word files (the latter are converted to PDF) when those files are attached to Functional Ecology decision letters in ScholarOne, so few reviewers should be identifiable by authors when submitting their reviews in one of these document formats (though this may not be the case for all journals). However, all 7 of the reviewers who submitted annotated manuscripts (PDFs) containing personal identifiers could be deanonymized by authors, despite not signing their reviews, because the identifiers on their in-line manuscript comments were not stripped from PDFs attached to the decision letters; this appears to be because ScholarOne stripped the document's overall "Author" field (in document properties) but not the comment-specific author fields.