

## **Martha MALAMUD**

### **The Uses and Abuses of the Peer-Review Process**

Authors, peer reviewers, and editors have very different perceptions of the peer review process. In this session, I'd like to raise the following issues:

- *What is the peer-review process?* Most, but not all, journals have a policy of anonymous reviewing. The number of people reading each article before a final decision is made about publication varies considerably from journal to journal. Should there be a single standard way of conducting peer review across the profession, and if so, how would one enforce it?
- *Who are our peers?* Should graduate students be reviewed by world-famous scholars? Should world-famous scholars be reviewed by graduate students and junior faculty members?
- *What effect* does the peer-review process have on how many graduate students and jr. faculty submit articles to professional journals? What effect does it have on how many established scholars submit articles to professional journals?
- *Which is worse*, the hyper-critical 8 page single-spaced vitriolic review of your innocuous 12 page article, or the benignly uninformative 2 sentence approval of your 85 page intricately argued masterpiece? How should you process the readers' reports in a way that will improve your article? Can you (and should you) survive with your ego intact?
- *Sharing the horror:* We all know that BAD things can happen in the peer review process. As an author, you may experience carelessness, ignorance, and rage from your referees. As a referee, your patience will be tried by submissions you feel are careless, uninformed, jejune, or outright wrong. As an editor, you will be frequently on the horns of a dilemma. I will provide some examples.
- *Why we still do it:* the system breaks down frequently, but more often than not, it works. Some examples of how it benefits authors, editors, and the scholarly community.