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## **On not re-submitting the re-revised version of my article to the *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*—or: What is the normal time for an editor to decide about the publication of an article?**

I present here some experiences I've had with my article submission to the *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes (JWCI)*. I believe colleagues and authors should share and make public information about editorial practices of various journals in order to help each other avoid similar experiences. My aim is to invite colleagues who had similar experiences with *JWCI* or other journals to share such information as well. More generally, I should like to initiate a debate about the fair and reasonable time in which the authors have the right to expect the decision about the publication or the rejection of the manuscripts they submit to journals.

Originally, I submitted a paper about Guarino Guarini's theories of light and vision to *JWCI* on 20 April 2021. I decided to send the manuscript to them because they publish articles on similar topics, have a generous article length limit and I had never published with them in the past. Having received no response for (almost) **six months** I sent to them an e-mail inquiring about the state of the submission on 10 October 2021. Since they did not respond for another ten days, I wrote directly to the editor, Elizabeth McGrath, to her official e-mail address. She did not deign to respond, but the journal manager finally responded on 26 October 2021 and informed me that they needed to obtain a second opinion, that it is hard to find suitable reviewers and that they hope to make decision soon. Finally, on 18 January 2022, **nine months** after the original submission, I received two reviews, that were competent and helpful, so I revised the article and resubmitted it on 27 March 2022. After **additional five months** of silence, I inquired about the state of the re-submission on 27 August 2022. The response I received was that the editors have decided that they needed to look for a new reviewer—that is, **sixteen months** after the original submission and five months after I resubmitted a revised version of the article. They offered me to withdraw the article, which sounded almost cynical, considering the time I had already spent waiting for their decision. So I acquiesced to a new reviewer. Finally, on 6 February 2022, **more than twenty-one months after the original submission**, I received an e-mail from *JWCI* with a letter and a new review. The letter explained that since the original reviewers were not available to evaluate my resubmission, the editors looked for another reviewer, initiated the reviewing process from the beginning, and I was now being asked to re-submit the article following the requests of this latest review. They also explained that in the case this latest reviewer would not be available to evaluate the re-resubmission, the re-resubmission would have to be peer reviewed once again, and the whole process would again start from the beginning. To make things worse, unlike the original two

reviews, this review was hard to take seriously. It was possibly done by some Kepler scholar who therefore insisted on more material about Kepler and *camera obscura*—a demand that had little to do with the content of my paper. The detail that revealed the incompetence of the reviewer was the claim that “there was no distinction between mathematicians and architects before late 18th century”. This is clearly nonsense. Vitruvius, and therefore the Vitruvian tradition, clearly differentiated between architects and mathematicians (*De arch.* 1.1.17-18); Leon Battista Alberti says that mathematics is necessary for an architect but does not identify the two (*De re aed.* 9.10) and Renaissance Vicentines certainly knew that Andrea Palladio was an architect, whereas Silvio Belli was a mathematician. But I was now *de facto* required to endorse the reviewer’s false claim about the relationship between architecture and mathematics in the early modern era if I wanted my paper published.

My first reaction when I read the review was to shrug. I would certainly not intentionally include false claims in my paper in order to please the reviewer and get published. More generally, at the advanced stage of my career, I have little reason to worry about my publication record. I am currently working on a book about Guarini and the article will make a fine chapter in the manuscript. It took me some time to realise that these were bad and selfish thoughts. For if it does not matter for me, the experience is certainly relevant for my colleagues who may plan to submit an article to *JWCI*. The experience particularly matters to those young scholars who need publication record and who believe that by submitting a paper to *JWCI* they may get a publication that will help them with their jobs, careers and academic survival. They need to be warned that if the same situation that happened to me happens to them, and if they have to wait many years while their manuscript undergoes successive reviews by new and new reviewers at *JWCI*, they may not get a job or tenure that they would have got had they submitted their manuscript to another journal.

The scholarly community needs to have a system that would help us all to avoid journals with editorial practices like the one I have experienced with *JWCI*. There are web sites where one can check the reputation of book publishers before submitting manuscripts to them, and there should be a way to share similar information about editorial practices of academic journals as well.

Please feel free to comment and share similar experiences!

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