

Referees' quotes – 2010

Our referees, the Editorial Board Members and ad hoc reviewers, are busy, serious individuals who give selflessly of their precious time to improve manuscripts submitted to Environmental Microbiology. But, once in a while, their humour (or admiration) gets the better of them. Here are some quotes from reviews made over the past year, just in time for the Season of Goodwill and Merriment.

- Done! Difficult task, I don't wish to think about constipation and faecal flora during my holidays! But, once a referee, always and anywhere a referee; we are good boy scouts in the research wilderness. Even under the sun and near a wonderful beach.
- This paper is desperate. Please reject it completely and then block the author's email ID so they can't use the online system in future.
- The type of lava vs. diversity has no meaning if only one of each sample is analyzed; multiple samples are required for generality. This controls provenance (e.g. maybe some beetle took a pee on one or the other of the samples, seriously skewing relevance to lava composition).
- Very much enjoyed reading this one, and do not have any significant comments. Wish I had thought of this one.
- It is sad to see so much enthusiasm and effort go into analyzing a dataset that is just not big enough.
- You call the sample fresh water, this is confusing as it is saline water.
- The biggest problem with this manuscript, which has nearly sucked the will to live out of me, is the terrible writing style.
- The abstract and results read much like a laundry list.
- The information in the tree figs. is pretty inscrutable.
- There was little I could think of to improve this nice paper.
- Ken, I would suggest that EM is setting up a fund that pays for the red wine reviewers may need to digest manuscripts like this one. (*Ed.: this excellent suggestion was duly proposed to the Publisher. However, given the logistical difficulties of problem-solving within narrow time frames, combined with the known deleterious effect of transport on good wine, a modification of the remedy was adopted, namely that Editors would act as proxies for reviewers with said digestive complaints.*)
- The statement that glycolipids and phospholipids 'may play an important role in stabilising the outer membrane' is odd because this they definitely do in all Eubacteria.
- Merry X-mas! First, my recommendation was reject with new submission, because it is necessary to investigate further, but reading a well written manuscript before X-mas makes me feel like Santa Claus.
- Alfachetoglutarate.
- I have to admit that I would have liked to reject this paper because I found the tone in the Reply to the Reviewers so annoying. It may be irritating to deal with reviewer's comments (believe me, I know!) but it is not wise to let your irritation seep through every line you write!
- The authors still confuse relative abundance of a transcript in a community transcript pool (which is what they are measuring) with upregulation or downregulation of genes (which they are not measuring).
- One might call this not only a skillfully executed paper but also well-rounded and thorough, with unique aspects of microbial systematics and biochemistry. The experimental work with chemostats is excellent. I have little to offer other than praise and a few minor comments.
- Season's Greetings! I apologise for my slow response but a roast goose prevented me from answering emails for a few days.
- I started to review this but could not get much past the abstract.
- Hopeless – Seems like they have been asleep and are not up on recent work on metagenomics.
- This paper is awfully written. There is no adequate objective and no reasonable conclusion. The literature is quoted at random and not in the context of argument. I have doubts about the methods and whether the effort of data gathering is sufficient to arrive at a useful conclusion.
- Stating that the study is confirmative is not a good start for the Discussion. Rephrasing the first sentence of the Discussion would seem to be a good idea.
- The main emphasis in the title is the use of a widely used method. This is not very exciting news. The authors are not to be blamed here. Based on titles seen in journals, many authors seem to be more fascinated these days by their methods than by their science. The authors should be encouraged to abstract the main scientific (i.e., novel) finding into the title.
- A weak paper, poor experimental design, comparison of sequences using different primers, no statistical analysis possible, carelessly written, poorly thought through.

- There is a great deal of freely available genomic data in the world and the authors would be much better off training themselves on that while waiting for genomic data to be generated for their system.
- This is a long, but excellent report. I had considered asking for EMSAs, but these will not significantly improve the study. It hurts me a little to have so little criticism of a manuscript.
- Always dear EMI takes care of its referees, providing them with entertainment for the holiday time in between Xmas and New Year. Plus the server shows, as usual, its inhuman nature and continues to send reminding messages. Well, between playing tennis on the Wii, eating and drinking, I found time and some strength of mind to do this work.
- At the risk of appearing unkind, the authors' main selling point for this paper seems to be that it is the biggest soil pyrosequencing project so far. I fear we are entering a phase of repeating all of the studies carried out over the past 15 years, but now using pyrosequencing.
- I agreed to review this Ms whilst answering e-mails in the golden glow of a balmy evening on the terrace of our holiday hotel on Lake Como. Back in the harsh light of reality in Belfast I realize that it's just on the limit of my comfort zone and that it would probably have been better not to have volunteered.
- I suppose that I should be happy that I don't have to spend a lot of time reviewing this dreadful paper; however I am depressed that people are performing such bad science.
- The presentation is of a standard that I would reject from an undergraduate student. Take Table 1: none of the data has units or an explanation. Negative controls gave a positive signal, but there is no explanation of why and how this was dealt with; just that it was different.
- This is as solid a write up as I have seen, many spend much more time and space to say considerably less. It is a perfect example of a compact report.
- The ecological theory invoked appears more as an afterthought than the true driving ambition of the study.
- This paper is afflicted by the same problem of many others re omics: one mutant is made in gene X, authors compare the corresponding transcriptomes and produce a list of genes that go up or down, plus various pages of discussion. Period. Nice, but a bit insufficient, I am afraid. Authors may be invited to go beyond a mere description and document experimentally at least some of their predictions.
- I found the manuscript to be well performed in all aspects, from the experimental design to the writing of the manuscript. I wish all manuscripts I review were of this quality.
- I usually try to nice but this paper has got to be one of the worst I have read in a long time.
- Well, I did some of the work the authors should have done!
- To my knowledge the most comprehensive IVET analysis ever done; huge workload, meticulously executed research, concisely presented.
- I feel like a curmudgeon, but I still have problems with this paper.
- Sorry for the overdue, it seems to me that 'overdue' is my constant, persistent and chronic EMI status. Good that the reviewers are not getting red cards! The editors could create, in addition to the referees quotes, a ranking for 'on-time' referees. I would get the bottom place. But fast is not equal to good (I am consoling myself!).
- I have accepted to see this one, but I still have 2 EM manuscripts whose reviews I have to complete (they will be done by tomorrow). Please be a bit benevolent with the deadline!
- landmark paper on *P. putida* physiology.
- The lack of negative controls. . . results in the authors being lost in the funhouse. Unfortunately, I do not think they even realize this.
- Preliminary and intriguing results that should be published elsewhere.
- It is always a joy to review manuscripts such as this. Well-conceived, well executed, well edited. Clean. Pristine. From start to finish.
- Reject – More holes than my grandad's string vest!
- The writing and data presentation are so bad that I had to leave work and go home early and then spend time to wonder what life is about.