
The PLE Conference 2013

Personal Learning Environments: Learning and Diversity in Cities of the Future

Review and Shepherding



PLE 2013 - 4th International Conference on Personal Learning Environments

The overall review process

The PLE 2013 review process is organized into **three steps**:

Step 1 (review before the conference): Submitted abstracts for full and short papers are peer-reviewed (double-blind peer-review) by screening their overall fit with the conference scope as well as the degree of innovation, technical quality, significance and clarity of contributions. As a guide, the extended abstract for a full paper should include the background of the study, the approach and methods employed, results and conclusion, which should reflect on successes and limitations of the work and future development.

Step 3 (shepherding) To enhance the participatory character of the PLE Conference the review process is based on the shepherding concept. This means that the authors of accepted abstracts are invited to submit full versions of their papers for the conference and are offered support by shepherds (mentors) in the process of writing final full versions. Upon author's consent, depending on the overall paper maturity, a mentor may be assigned to a paper to guide the process of preparing the manuscript. Shepherds are experienced authors who, non-anonymously, help the submitters by making suggestions for improvement. The submitters incorporate these improvements into their work over a few iterations, usually three, though this may vary from case to case. The aim of shepherding is to enhance the quality of the submissions and help authors qualify for publication in the journal.

Step 2 (review after the conference): After the conference, the final manuscripts of short and full papers are submitted and peer-reviewed (double-blind peer-review) again to assess their quality for publication in a special issue of the scientific journal. All submissions will be published in electronic conference proceedings under a Creative Commons Licence. However, only best-quality papers will be considered for the Special Issue of a Journal.

The Shepherding Concept

Where does shepherding come from? What is it about?

Shepherding for scientific reviewing started at Conferences on Pattern Languages of Programs (PLoP's), a process aimed to help authors to improve their work using a non-anonymous reviewer (shepherd), guiding the author (sheep) on their way ([report](#)). The shepherds focus on the organization of the content and the format of articles. Shepherds therefore must be experts in their field and willing to help to improve the work of others. The focus of shepherding feedback is the text itself, there is no discussion of the projects or theories. The goal is to improve the papers for the second review after shepherding.

What is the value of shepherding?

Shepherding is now being used by several conference committees to help leverage the potential value of authors' work by improving them considerably and thus better serving the community. This approach helps to develop more well-rounded articles. It is also an excellent opportunity for newer authors to improve their articles and to get in contact with the community.

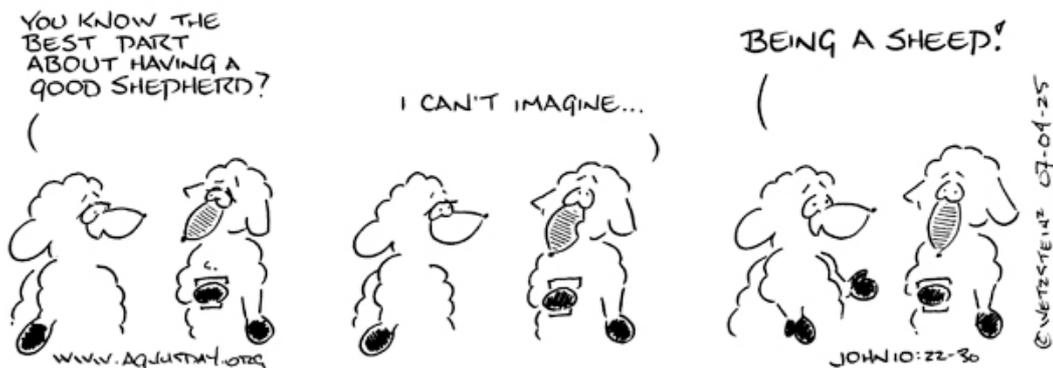
What are the principles of shepherding?

Shepherds are experts in their field. The work is of the author. Shepherds advise authors during the process of writing. The person ultimately responsible for the article is the author (sheep). The underlying culture is a gift culture, so it is crucial that shepherds are willing to help authors to improve.

The cycles of interaction between authors and shepherds based on [Kelly \(2008\)](#) are:

- Author sends the first version of the manuscript to the shepherd and introduces the manuscript briefly in his/her own words;
- Shepherds reply to authors, i.e. ask questions (e.g. What is the motivation for the paper? What do you want to achieve? Where can I help?) and provide initial feedback. Constructive feedback and suggestions for improvement are crucial for shepherding!
- Authors improve the manuscript by answering the questions and incorporating the shepherd's feedback.
- Authors send improved manuscripts to shepherds and another cycle starts with the introduction of the new version (iterative cycle).

Testimonials from shepherds



Source: http://www.agnusday.org/strips/John10v22to30_2007.jpg

“As a shepherd, I get great satisfaction helping authors communicate their ideas. A shepherd is not an editor. Shepherds don't edit. Instead, through conversations, questions, and dialog a shepherd helps authors find their own voice and write compelling papers. I find shepherding to be a wonderful experience. That's why I do it: to learn, to help grow communities, and to help people share their good ideas more clearly. It's so rewarding!” Rebecca Wirfs-Brock (PLoP community)

“In my experience, when it is done well, shepherding results in an increased focus and clarity to the work. A good shepherd can help the sheep really bring out the important message of the work and make it much clearer to the reader. On occasion, the sheep gains additional insights into his own work. Note however, that I have seen some superficial shepherding, which resulted in only cosmetic improvements to the work. So it isn't an automatic great improvement. It takes discipline to do a good job.” Neil Harrison (PLoP)

“Shepherds are individuals, with experience in writing, assigned to an author's paper with the expressed interest in helping the author improve their paper or writing of any kind. The shepherding process is essentially a review process where the author gets to get feedback on how well the paper communicates the author's ideas. The shepherd is able to then make suggestions on making the paper better or to assist with ways on helping the author clarify their ideas. Shepherding is about improving the paper itself, while the Shepherd maintains that the author is the one doing the writing. The shepherd can guide an author into a more mature understanding of his or her paper. The best shepherds are those that usually have a good understanding of the subject matter they are reviewing. The main goal of a shepherd is to help the author(s) to make the paper the best that it can be given the amount of "shepherding" time they have for the given venue the paper is to be presented at.” Joseph W. Yoder (PLoP community)

Shepherding at PLE'13

Shepherding is an instrument to improve the quality of submissions, help authors connect with the scientific community and strengthen connections within the PLE community. Shepherds are mentors drawn from the Review Committee. Beside the intrinsic value and the insight into interesting papers, mentors will receive special recognition - shepherds will be featured on the special page and receive special badges rewarding their work. Also authors will vote for the best shepherd. The winners will be awarded at the PLE Conference 2013.

General rules

Reviewers decide to shepherd only papers that are promising and where efforts can be made. Shepherds are experts in their field, but they cannot become co-authors of the shepherded paper. Shepherding and review are separate and stand-alone processes: Shepherds offer additional help but they do not replace reviewers.

Becoming a shepherd

We are looking for qualified reviewers including ones who are interested in learning and applying shepherding.

If you are interested in becoming a #PLECONF reviewer and/or shepherd, please add your name and the topic of interest/your expertise to the [open list](#) by the end of February 2013.

If you would like more information about shepherding, please contact Ademar Aguiar at: ademar.aguiar@fe.up.pt.

Starting in March we will schedule two online meetings for reviewers who are interested in learning and applying shepherding.

Timeline

- 4 March 2013: Deadline for all submissions
- 12 April 2013: Author notification of acceptance
- **12 April 2013: Shepherding Process (only full and short papers)**
- 14 June 2013: Submission of final papers
- 10-12 July 2013: Conference

Shepherding Guidelines

Below we suggest guidelines for shepherds and authors, which can be modified to fit specific needs:

Guidelines for shepherds (mentors)

- Shepherds establish contact with selected authors. The first contact should aim at building a relationship with the author. It is important to make shepherding personal. Shepherds tell authors about themselves and what they expect from them.
- After first contact, shepherds send authors questions regarding the text, for example: What is the motivation for the paper? What do you want to achieve?
- Next, shepherds evaluate the text and explain the aspects they like about the article. This positive feedback is crucial for the shepherding process. Only after positive feedback, shepherds make suggestions for improvement. Both praise and criticism of form, style and content are important for improvement.

Shepherding guidelines for authors

- After first feedback from the shepherd authors make improvements to the article by answering their shepherd's questions.
- Authors send a revised version of the text with integrated improvements.
- Questions and improvements are repeated until both the author and the shepherd agree on that the level of quality is sufficient. Shepherding usually takes 6 weeks.

Allocation and quality

Shepherds choose the papers they would like to support with their expertise. The process is managed by the Review Committee Chair. The RC Chair supervises and tracks each shepherd-author process (always include the RC Chair in CC). In this way the RC Chair monitors the process and may support communication between shepherds and authors.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us at pleconfweb@gmail.com

References

Language of Shepherding (pdf) - The Hillside Group

<http://hillside.net/europlop/europlop2003/shepherding.pdf>

Assistance of a critical friend (pdf) - British Journal of Educational Technology (BJET)

<http://tinyurl.com/bpg3sll>