The Power of the (peer-reviewed) Word

Moshe Sniedovich



November 16, 2011 RMIT

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|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Abstract | | | | | | |

In this presentation I briefly discuss practical and philosophical issues related to the role of the peer-review process in maintaining the quality of scientific publications.

The discussion is based on, among other things, my experience over the past eight years in containing the spread of voodoo decision theories in Australia.

To motivate the discussion, I ask:

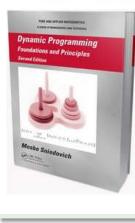
How do you justify the use a model of local robustness (operating in the neighborhood of a wild guess) to manage Black Swans and Unknown Unknowns?

See http://info-gap.moshe-online.com/reviews/review_17.html



Not to be discussed in this presentation

Dynamic Programming: Foundations and Principles, Second Edition Moshe Sniedovich, University of Melbourne, Australia Series: Chapman & Hall/CRC Pure and Applied Mathematics



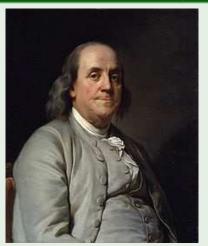
Price: \$169.95 Cat. #: DK2356 ISBN: 9780824740993 ISBN 10: 0824740998 Publication Date: September 10, 2010 Number of Pages: 624 Availability: In Stock Binding(s): Hardback | Available in e-book!

Email this title to a friend





Give me 26 lead soldiers and I will conquer the world!



Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

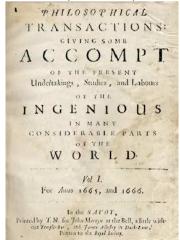
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The pen is mightier than the sword!



Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803-1873)

Apparently it all started around 1752: the Royal Society of London took over the editorial responsibilities for its journal *Philosophical Transactions* (est. 1665).



http://www.visionlearning.com/library/module_viewer.php?mid=159

- Scientific manuscripts and funding proposals are reviewed by several peer scientists who are familiar with the field of research and who make recommendations on whether or not the work should be published and/or funded.
- Peer review works on many levels and is a fundamental component of the process of science.
- After publication, scientific papers and other forms of research dissemination are further scrutinized by the scientific community when scientists read or try to reproduce the research.
- Scientists conduct peer review as part of their responsibility to the scientific community, and are themselves evaluated by the peer review process.

Post-Publication Peer Review



| Post-Pul | blicatio | on Peer Reviev | v | | | | |
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What is F1000?

EVALUATED ARTICLES: POST-PUBLICATION PEER REVIEW

Faculty of 1000 (F1000) identifies and evaluates the most important articles in biology and medical research publications. Articles are selected by a peer-nominated global 'Faculty' of the world's leading scientists and clinicians who then rate them and explain their importance. From the numerical ratings awarded, we have created a unique system for quantifying the importance of individual articles and, from these article ratings, journals. Both articles and journals can then be ranked overall and, importantly, at the subject, or Faculty, level.

Launched in 2002, F1000 was conceived as a collaboration of 1000 international Faculty Members. The name stuck even though the remit of the service continues to grow and the Faculty now numbers more than 10,000 experts worldwide. Their evaluations form a fully searchable database containing more than 100,000 records and identifying the best research available.

Faculty Members and their evaluations are organized into over 40 Faculties (subjects), which are further subdivided into over 300 Sections.

On average, 1500 new evaluations are published each month; this corresponds to approximately 2% of all published articles in the biological and medical sciences.





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Post-Publication Peer Review



FACULTY of 1000

This is the first application of a relatively new method for making decisions under uncertainty, information gap ('info-gap') theory, to a real conservation problem, saving the Sumatran rhino Dicerorhinus sumatrensis.

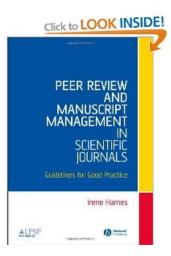
It provides hope for managers who want to use rational decision-making methods, but are overwhelmed by the amount and types of uncertainty they face.

Using 'info-gap' theory, the best decision is the one that achieves an acceptable outcome with the greatest level of uncertainty. The application is concise and ideally suited to teaching and technology transfer. For the abstract of this paper, please see http://www.esajournals.org/esaonline/?request=get-archive .

http://f1000.com/1031061

Evaluated by: Hugh Possingham University of Queensland, Australia Ecology 22 Feb 2006 Rating 8 Must Read

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| Further reading | | | | | | | | | |





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| Example | 9 | | | | |

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Verifiability

"...Where available, academic and **peer-reviewed** publications are usually the most reliable sources, such as in history, medicine, and science. But they are not the only reliable sources in such areas. Material from reliable non-academic sources may also be used, particularly if it appears in respected mainstream publications. ..."

Example: Nature



"... Nature receives approximately 10,000 papers every year and our editors reject about 60% of them without review. (Since the journal's launch in 1869, Nature's editors have been the only arbiters of what it publishes.) The papers that survive beyond that initial threshold of editorial interest are submitted to our traditional process of assessment, in which two or more referees chosen by the editors are asked to comment anonymously and confidentially. Editors then consider the comments and proceed with rejection, encouragement or acceptance. In the end we publish about 7% of our submissions."

http://www.nature.com/nature/peerreview/debate/nature05535.html

Example: University of Kent, UK



"... The University will be introducing an internal peer review system from **1 October**.

Kent Peer Review (KPR) comes in response to the stated intentions of the Research Councils to introduce 'demand management' systems. The EPSRC has already introduced a 'blacklisting' system for individuals; the BBSRC has introduced a grading system that may lead in time to a 'triage of grant proposals based on referee scores, in order to eliminate lower-scoring applications before the committee meeting'; and the AHRC is suggesting 'introducing sanctions ... if self-management proves ineffective'. ..."

http://fundermental.blogspot.com/2011/09/kent-peer-review-goes-live.html

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Australian Government

Australian Research Council

http://www.arc.gov.au/era/era_2010/outcomes_2010.htm

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Local Scene

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ERA 2010 National Report

In 2010, the Australian Research Council conducted the first full evaluation of the *Excellence in Research for Australia* (ERA) initiative. The report provides the outcomes of the ERA 2010 evaluations, which applies to research undertaken between 1 January 2003 and 31 December 2008.

ERA 2010 National Report (PDF Format,

24.4MB)

The entire ERA 2010 National Report (314 pages).

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Local Scene



CEO ARC Professor Margaret Sheil

For ERA 2010, the ARC received data in relation to some 330,000 unique research outputs and over 55,000 researchers across all eight discipline clusters. I am deeply appreciative of the work of institutional research offices in the lead up to and during the submission process. On behalf of all involved, I would like to sincerely acknowledge the work of some 700 expert reviewers and 62 peak bodies involved in the development of the Ranked Journal list, and of over 500 ERA peer reviewers across the world, who contributed their evaluative and discipline expertise to the ERA development process.

The efforts of the 149 members of the eight Research Evaluation Committees, whose expertise and diligent work in their evaluation of 157 research areas has been central to ERA 2010, deserve special recognition.

ARC ERA 2010 National Report



You are here: Home, Research Excellence, ERA 2010

Ranked Journal List Development

Please note that material on this page is strictly related to the ERA 2010 process and is not relevant for the ERA 2012 process.

20,712 unique peer reviewed journals have been included in the ERA 2010 Journal List.

Each journal has a single quality rating (or is not ranked) and is assigned to one or more disciplines defined by *Field of Research (FoR)* code(s). The full list of FoR codes can be found here:

 Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification (ANZSRC)

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Local Scene

http://www.asor.org.au/page.php?page=14

| Journal Title | ERA Ranking |
|---|----------------|
| Annals of Operations Research | А |
| Applied Mathematics and Optimization | С |
| Asia-Pacific Journal of Operational Research | В |
| ASOR Bulletin | |
| Computational and Applied Mathematics | С |
| Computational Management Science | В |
| Computational Optimization and Applications | В |
| Computers & Industrial Engineering | В |
| Computers & Operations Research | А |
| Decision Support Systems | A* |
| Discrete Applied Mathematics | Α |
| Discrete Mathematics | В |
| Discrete Mathematics & Theoretical Computer Science | В |

Just a sample ...





You are here: Home, Research Excellence, ERA 2012

ERA 2012

The Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, the Hon Senator Kim Carr, announced on 25 October 2010 that another round of ERA is scheduled for 2012.

Information will be placed and updated on this web page as it becomes available:

- Important dates
- ERA 2012 FAQ
- ERA 2012 Journal List
- ERA 2012 Key Documents
- ERA 2012 Notifications
- ERA Consultation
- Citation Provider
- ERA 2012 REC Membership

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'.... The mistake, of course, is to have thought that peer review was any more than a crude means of discovering the acceptability not the validity – of a new finding. Editors and scientists alike insist on the pivotal importance of peer review. We portray peer review to the public as a quasi-sacred process that helps to make science our most objective truth teller. But we know that the system of peer review is biased, unjust, unaccountable, incomplete, easily fixed, often insulting, usually ignorant, occasionally foolish, and frequently wrong. A recent editorial in Nature was right to conclude that an over-reliance on peer-reviewed publication "has disadvantages that should be countered by adequate provision of time and resources for independent assessment and, in the midst of controversies, publicly funded agencies providing comprehensive, reliable and prompt complementary information."'

Horton, R. MJA 2000, 172:148-149.

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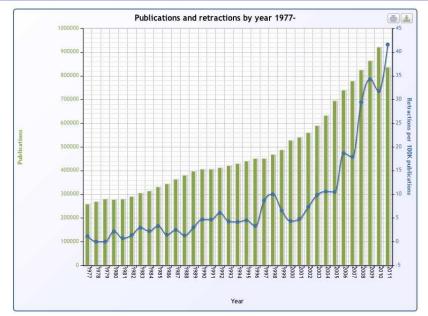
Example



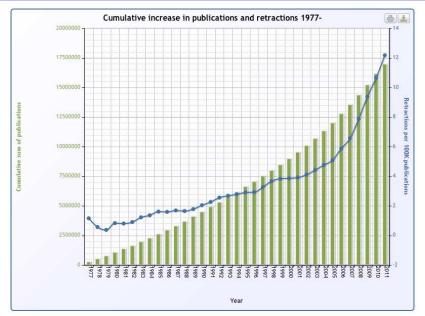
http://www.forums.pangeareptile.com/forums/showthread.php?p=405330

"... As a bibliophile myself, I understand your natural inclination to believe the printed (supposedly peer-reviewed) word over what you're hearing here; but I myself have several books on crested geckos that I am 100% sure include quite a bit of unfortunately incorrect information. As Sericinda pointed out, the authors themselves (who many here have interacted with at least online if not met in person) will agree that the written/printed information from a decade or two ago about cresties is very outdated."

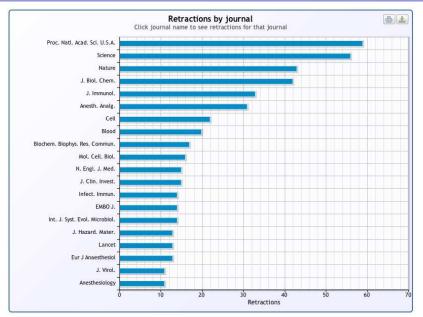
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Retraction

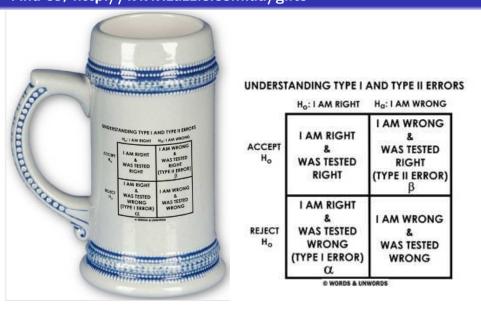
Editorial. A case of plagiarism: retraction of a paper by Sreenivas and Srinivas, Vol. 43, n°4, pp. 331–337

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"... The Federal government took a calculated risk investing in a multidisciplinary centre that was very different from traditional ecological science.

And what has been the return on that investment? Quite a lot if you consider our achievements (many of which have been presented in *Decision Point*, see the next page for just a few examples). It's important to note that all of these outputs appeared in the **peer-reviewed literature** (including some of the top journals like *Science* and *Nature*). We often forget that the CERF program is a research program, albeit applied research, and **research must eventually be subject to peer review to be credible.**"

> Hugh Possingham Decision Point, 45 (2010), p. 2



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| And so, | | | | | | | |

We can distinguish then between two generic cases:

| | Type I Error |
|------|-------------------------|
| А "g | ood" paper is rejected. |

Type II Error

A "bad" paper is accepted.

The focus in this discussion is on ... Type II Errors.

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Type I Error: just in case ...

Journal of

Universal Rejection

http://www.universalrejection.org/

About the Journal

The founding principle of the Journal of Universal Rejection (JofUR) is rejection. Universal rejection. That is to say, all submissions, regardless of quality, will be rejected.

Despite that apparent drawback, here are a number of reasons you may choose to submit to the JofUR:

- You can send your manuscript here without suffering waves of anxiety regarding the eventual fate of your submission. You know with 100% certainty that it will not be accepted for publication.
- There are no page-fees.
- You may claim to have submitted to the most prestigious journal (judged by acceptance rate).
- The JofUR is one-of-a-kind. Merely submitting work to it may be considered a badge of honor.
- You retain complete rights to your work, and are free to resubmit to other journals even before our review process is complete.
- Decisions are often (though not always) rendered within hours of submission.

Journal of Journal of Universal Rejection

http://www.universalrejection.org/

Instructions for Authors

The JofUR solicits any and all types of manuscript: poetry, prose, visual art, and research articles. You name it, we take it, and reject it. Your manuscript may be formatted however you wish. Frankly, we don't care.

A sample rejection letter

Thank you for your submission to the Journal of Universal Rejection.

Our readership prefers stories with lots of landscape description. Clearly as your story stands we cannot accept it for publication. Should you add something about (e.g.) the hills around Derbyshire into your story, we would give the story another look. We also accept bribes, and are almost as trustworthy as the characters in your story; small bills only please.

Best regards, Caleb

Type I Error: just in case ...

A sample self-rejection letter

Dear Ms. Lyris,

Rarely do we see such talent. Your provocative characters and intense drama kept us deeply engaged until the brilliant ending, after which we felt the need to plant forests and work at soup kitchens.

To be blunt, your stories have brought us the personal transformation and transcendence we might otherwise have spent a lifetime seeking. On behalf of the Journal we must reject your submission on the grounds that our readership is simply not mature enough for this sort of insight. We're sure you understand.

Should you decide to submit again you might consider something more light-hearted. We understand that Dr. Isaac Asimov wrote limericks in between Nebula and Hugo acceptance speeches. Perhaps you can do likewise.

Sincerely, Sonia Lyris, Editor



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Type II Error: bad apples ...



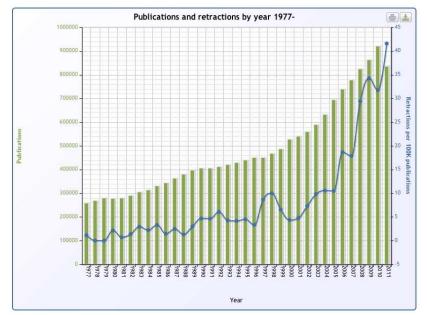
Type II Error: bad apples ... and lemons



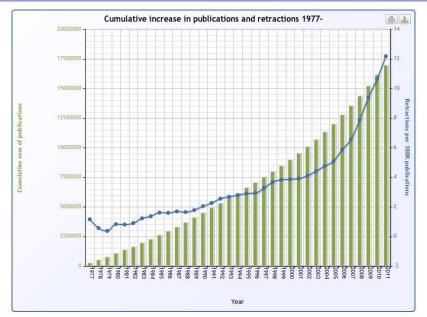
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peer_review

Peer review failures occur when a peer-reviewed article contains obvious fundamental errors that undermine at least one of its main conclusions. Many journals have no procedure to deal with peer review failures beyond publishing letters to the editor.

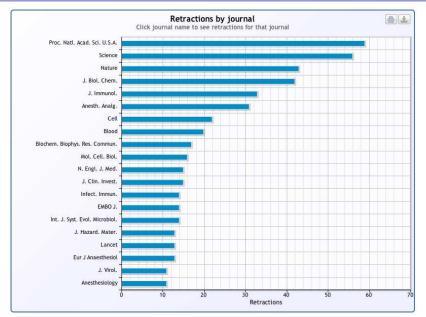
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Retraction

Editorial. A case of plagiarism: retraction of a paper by Sreenivas and Srinivas, Vol. 43, n°4, pp. 331–337

About retractions

. . .

"... In listing the top 10 retractions of 2010, *The Scientist* noted that four articles were cited 200-300 times and the MMR vaccine-autism article was cited 640 times before it was retracted by *The Lancet* in 2010. Even more astonishing is the finding by Redman et al that 325 retracted articles were cited 3,942 times before retraction and 4,501 times after retraction!

Steen has found that most retractions (nearly three-quarters) were errors (mistakes, duplicate publication, plagiarism, etc) and that the remaining quarter or so of retractions were considered fraud — either data fabrication (15%) or falsification (13%). ..."

Lori Alexander Beware the Retraction AMWA Journal Blog, Monday, April 11, 2011

http://amwajournal.blogspot.com/2011/04/beware-retraction.html

Flawed theories, methods, algorithms, ...

Something to think about

Suppose that serious flaws have been identified in a theory/method proposed in an article published in a peer-reviewed journal, say *The Best OR Journal on This Planet*.

Who is responsible for advising the readership of the journal of these flaws?

Options

- Author(s)
- Associate Editor
- Editor in Chief
- Editorial Board
- None

Example: very old (stylized) true case

So What Is The Issue?

Suppose that a certain theory is based, in a **crucial** way, on the following result:

Theorem 34

Bad apples

Flaws

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Nostradamus

Assumption 7 implies that

$$f(x, y) = g^{2}(x) + h^{2}(y)$$

Now, suppose that it is very easy to show that:

Observation

By inspection, Assumption 7 implies that

$$f(x, y) = g^{2}(x) - 2g(x)h(y) + h^{2}(y)$$

Question

How do you fix articles on this theory that have already been published in peer-reviewed journals?

Summarv

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Example: active case

Suppose that

- Articles promoting the use of a certain theory have been published in numerous (>20) peer-reviewed journals.
- Recently, the theory was found to be flawed and misleading and articles discussing this matter have been published in three peer-reviewed journals.
- A leading peer-reviewed journal, call it XXXX YYYYYYY, published 5 articles on this theory where there is no mention of the flaws in the theory.
- The Editor in Chief and the Associate Editors of XXXX YYYYYYYY have been informed about this.

Question

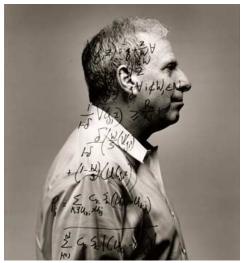
Who is responsible for advising the readership of XXXX YYYYYYY of the flaws in the theory? So What Is The Issue? Bad apples Nostradamus •00000000

The New Nostradamus

Michel de Nostredame



Bruce Bueno de Mesquita



1503 - 1566



"... It can predict complex negotiations or situations involving coercion, that is in essence everything that has to do with politics, much of what has to do with business"

Three important features

- Prediction models/methods are based on game theory.
- No special treatment of severe uncertainty.
- Over 90% accuracy! (so it is claimed)

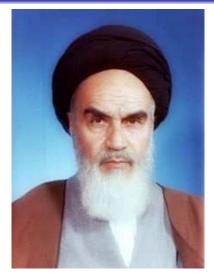


The New Nostradamus



 $http://rt.com/online-exclusive/galleries/cartoons/page-7/\#140 \qquad _{49/64}$

The New Nostradamus: most famous prediction



Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1902 - 1989) 1984: Who will be the successor?

The New Nostradamus: a peer-review perspective

Famous prediction: Ayatollah Khomeini's successor

"... The rise to power of Hasheimi Rafsanjani in Iran was predicted in an article published in 1984 at a time when Rafsanjani was widely viewed as an unimportant figure, and the Ayatollah Khomeini had officially designated Ayatollah Montezeri as his successor. ..."

James Lee Ray and Bruce Russett British Journal of Political Science, 26(4), 441-470, 1996. Cambridge University Press

Except that ...

- This is a grossly misleading statement.
- It misrepresents not only the facts, but also ... the analysis in the 1984 article.

http://decision-making.moshe-online.com/bueno_de_mesquita_iran.html

The New Nostradamus: some facts

"....The Islamic Government led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini appears to have fastened its grip more firmly on this country of 38 million people than at any time since the revolution that overthrew Shah Mohammed Riza Pahlevi almost four years ago. ... None of this is likely to change much while Ayatollah Khomeini lives, in the view of diplomats in Teheran. But he is 83 years old, his health is frail, and the search for a successor has begun. A committee to decide will be elected on Dec.10. but most politicians here seem to assume that a triumvirate will emerge to run the country after he dies. It would include Hojatolislam Rafsanjani, who is regarded as the **most able politician**; President Khamenei, and Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri, the Imam's designated heir, who is considered intellectually weak and insufficiently sophisticated by many politicians." http://www.nytimes.com/1982/11/21/world/khomeini-s-grip-appears-atits-tightest.html

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The New Nostradamus: A tale of two tables

1984 Article

What criteria determine the order in which the entries are listed? TABLE 1 Iran—Groups and Capabilities

| Group | Overal Influen |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Afghan Refugees (AFG) | .5 |
| Tudeh Party (TUD) | .6 |
| Kurds (KUR) | 2.3 |
| Turkoman (TUR) | .3 |
| Baluchis (BAL) | .6 |
| Royalists (ROY) | .2 |
| Bazaaris (BAZ) | 5.6 |
| Middle Class Rural Peasants (MCR) | .9 |
| Lower Class Rural Peasants (LCR) | 4.5 |
| Urban Middle Class (UMC) | 1.1 |
| Urban Poor (UP) | 4.5 |
| Technocrats (TEC) | .6 |
| Junior Clerics—Rafsanjani (JC) | 11.3 |
| President Khamenei (PRE) | 10.7 |
| Prime Minister Musavi-Khamenei | |
| (PM) | 9.0 |
| Tehran Militant Clerics (TMC) | 3.4 |
| Qum Clerics (QUM) | 4.5 |
| Supreme Court (SC) | 4.5 |
| Ayatollah Montezari (MON) | .1 |
| Revolutionary Guards (REV) | 12.4 |
| Committees/Cabinet (COM) | 11.8 |
| Council of Guardians (CG) | 9.0 |
| Ayatollah Golpayegani (GOL) | .6 |
| Ayatollah Shariat Madari (SHA) | .6 |
| Ayatollah Sherazi (SHE) | 0 |
| Ayatollah Tabot Tabai (TAB) | 0 |
| Soviet Union (SOV) | .6 |

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| Th | e N | lew | Nos | tradam | us: A | tale | of tw | o ta | bles | | |
| | | Group | 2 | | | Overall | Influenc | e | | | |
| | 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 9 10 111 122 133 14 155 166 177 188 19 | Revolu Comm Junior Presid Prime Counc Bazaa Lower Urban Qum (Supre Supre Tehrai Kurds Urban Middle Tudeh Baluch Techn Ayatol | utionary hittees/C Clerics - ent Khar Minister il of Gua ris (BAZ Class Ri Poor (U Clerics (C me Cour n Militani (KUR) Middle (class Ri Party (1 his (BAL) ocrats (1 llah Golp | ural Peasants P) UM) t (SC) Clarics (TMC) Uass (UMC) ural Peasants UD) EC) ayegani (GO | (JC) menei (PM) s (LCR) C) s (MCR) | | 12. 11. 10. 9. 5. 4. 4. 4. 4. 4. 4. 4. 0. 0. 0. 0. 0. 0. 0. 0. 0. 0. | 4 8 7 7 0 0 0 6 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 | Decreasing | overall | influence. |
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The New Nostradamus: Urban Legend

"... His first foray into forecasting controversy took place in 1984, when he published an article in PS, the flagship journal of the American Political Science Association, predicting who would succeed Iran's ruling Ayatollah Khomeini upon his death. He had developed a rudimentary forecasting model that was different from anything anyone had seen before in that it was not designed around one particular foreign-policy problem, but could be applied to any international conflict. "It was the first attempt at a general mathematical model of international conflict," he says. His model predicted that upon Khomeini's death, an ayatollah named Hojatolislam Khamenei and an obscure junior cleric named Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani would emerge to lead the country together. At the time, Rafsanjani was so little known that his name had yet to appear in the New York Times.

Issue 70, Michael A.M. Lerner, Ethan Hill

October 1, 2007 at 6:59 pm PDT

http://www.good.is/post/the-new-nostradamus

see also http://www.hoover.org/publications/digest/13846062.html

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> Galileo Galilei (1564-1642)



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Dangers of over-dependence on peer-reviewed publication Nature, 401, 387 (21 October 1999)

Something to think about ...

Suppose that serious flaws have been identified in a theory/method proposed in an article published in a peer-reviewed journal, say *The Best OR Journal on This Planet*. Who is responsible for advising the readership of the journal of these flaws?



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