

## Modern Law Review – A Quick Guide to Book Reviews & Review Articles

At the *MLR*, we encourage contributors to get in touch to suggest recent publications that they would like to review. We are also regularly contacted by publishers with news of recent publications and will reach out to scholars working in relevant fields to commission reviews.

Where we express interest in receiving a review, or proactively commission, it remains the case that acceptance is subject to editorial scrutiny and while we will work with authors where possible to 'revise and resubmit' pieces that we believe are likely to be publishable, we may ultimately have to decline submissions. In the case of book reviews, editorial scrutiny will most often be done in-house through the editorial board, though occasionally we may seek external input as needed. In the case of review articles, these will be sent out to external review as standard. In all cases where pieces are sent out to review, this is done via an anonymous, double-blind process, albeit outside of the ScholarOne submission platform.

### *Book Reviews*

We typically publish a number of book reviews per issue. Book reviews should not normally exceed 2,000 words in length and should not include footnotes. A 'good' book review is one that gives the reader a clear sense of the core contribution of the book, situating it effectively in the body of existing literature in the relevant field. It should be borne in mind that the *MLR* has a very broad and international readership so the review should be pitched at a level that will be accessible to the interested but non-expert reader, with efforts to draw out themes that make the publication and its review resonate across jurisdictions as much as possible. The time frame between commissioning a review and submission is typically around three-four months, with room for flexibility where necessary.

With 2,000 words at your disposal, it is important to be concise and focussed. There is no need to take the reader through the entirety of the book's structure and it would be preferable, having situated the contribution broadly in the field of scholarship, to focus the discussion instead around a sub-set of particular arguments or aspects that the reviewer thinks are especially worthy of attention. It is also important that the reader benefits from the 'voice' of the reviewer in this process. In other words, the review should engage critically and reflectively with the arguments and contributions in the book under review, and rather than merely describing the contents the reviewer should analyse and evaluate them. Doing so well will often involve targeting reviewer attention more on some areas than others.

When writing a book review, try to remain aware that many readers will lack familiarity with the field and subject matter of the book. Discipline-specific knowledge should not be readily assumed, and it may be necessary to set out and explain the core problems a book addresses, and why they are important. It is preferable for reviewers to set out these elements in their own words, rather than relying heavily on quotations to do the explanatory work.

The writing style should be clear and accessible, avoiding discipline-specific jargon as much as possible. By the end of the review, the reader should have a good sense of what the book is about, its main distinctive claims and content, the contribution it makes to the field, and the reviewer's own evaluations of at least some of those contributions.

### *Review Articles*

Review Articles may not feature in every issue of *MLR*, but we welcome these lengthier contributions. They should not normally exceed 10,000 words (excluding footnotes). With the longer word count at your disposal, we expect authors of review articles to engage even more deeply and reflectively with the publication that inspired the submission. Authors should not feel compelled, of course, to restrict their focus only to that publication, but it should provide a significant 'jumping off' point for the development of their own analysis, and that analysis should in itself make a novel and important contribution to the field of relevant knowledge. In terms of depth and analytical rigour, review articles are also expected to demonstrate the same qualities as regular full-length articles published in *MLR*. In these respects, review articles are not simply longer versions of regular book reviews. Authors should be wary of devoting too much space to describing the content of the book, to the detriment of making their own contribution.

As with book reviews, it is necessary to bear in mind the international, broad and general nature of the *MLR* readership and to ensure that the review article is written in a manner that will be engaging, accessible and relevant to them.