

Editorials

Round Table Editors Meeting ESPR, JSS and Int JLCA

13–14 October 2006 in Heidelberg, Germany

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1065/espr2006.10.351>

How do you attract the best manuscripts for publication in our three English-language scientific journals? Certainly,

- the journals must be appropriate to the researcher's topics and interests;
- there must be clearly described author and submission guidelines;
- the process must be transparent;
- the peer-review process must be both thorough and timely; and
- the journal must be extensively abstracted, broadly distributed, and frequently cited.

We would all agree that these items are certainly required, but to make each one a reality, it takes a cadre of dedicated editors. Just such a group of editors gathered together on 13–14 October 2006 in Heidelberg, Germany. Twenty editors representing all three journals came together from as far away as Australia, China, the United States, and from throughout Europe. The agenda was challenging, the discussion was lively, and the comradery infectious! So what did was concluded?

Distribution

All of the Editors were pleased with the continuing improvements in the journals Electronic Submission System (ESS). We attributed the increased numbers of submissions that the three journals are receiving to both the implementation of the ESS and the tremendous increase in the worldwide distribution of the journals that has occurred this past year due to the efforts of Springer Verlag. We were pleased to see that more than 2,000 copies of the journals are being distributed worldwide (in 50 countries for ESPR; 40 countries for the JSS, and 25 countries for Int JLCA).

Quality

We recognized that we may not be able to clearly define what is a 'quality' manuscript, but we can at least have a set of standards that will contribute to the preparation of what we perceive is a 'good' manuscript. Hence the editors proposed that the Reviewer Form used by our referees be integrated within the Authors Guidelines and the ESS, respectively. Thus, the authors will know the criteria that are used by the referees to judge their manuscripts.

The additional criterion for a 'very good' paper was considered to be that of 'innovation'. So it was suggested to have the authors describe the innovative aspects of their papers to be submitted.

Frameworks

Although the Subject Area Frameworks for ESPR and JSS were appropriate, they also needed to be attached to the Author Guidelines and the ESS, respectively. When authors prepare their papers using the Authors Guidelines, they would be asked to identify the subject area(s) most appropriate to their topic. This

would assist in placing the abstract and subsequent manuscript with the right Principal-Subject Editors for ESPR, and Subject Editors for Int J LCA and JSS.

As we developed the Subject Area Frameworks for ESPR and JSS, we loosely used the terms Principal-Subject Editors (for ESPR only), Subject Editors and Associate Subject Editors. A definition of the specific roles will be attached to the Author Guidelines.

To avoid confusion with the driving force in the ESS, we need to identify the individual that guides the paper through the ESS as the 'Submission Editor' (so far, the term 'Subject Editor' was used here as well). A definition of the specific role of the Submission Editor will be integrated in the ESS.

Concerns

1. Some concern was expressed over the fact that the distribution of the OnlineEditions by Springer Verlag does not include the papers published in OnlineFirst.
2. Some concern was expressed over the **length** of the manuscripts being submitted, including the abstracts. The editors recommended condensed papers wherever possible and to let the authors explain the reasons when papers exceed the number of pages requested in the Authors Guidelines.
3. Some concern was expressed over the **time period** between the **OnlineFirst** publication and the appearance in the **printed journal**. Although the OnlineFirst publication is the official one and that in the printed journal just an afterthought, we have to take into consideration that many authors are under pressure by their institutions to verify that their papers have been printed. Hence the time difference ought to be as short as possible.

To achieve that, three requirements have to be fulfilled:

- (1) the length of a paper ought to be 'reasonable', i.e. as short as possible and as long as necessary,
- (2) the review process ought to be more selective than it is presently,
- (3) the rejection rate in terms of the selection process ahead of the review process ought to be increased as well.

In addition, as the three journals are exceeding the number of pages calculated for each issue, we are planning to have 7 issues per year for ESPR and Int JLCA and 6 for JSS, beginning in 2007. This will result in a modest increase in both the individual and institutional rates.

Lastly, the Editors spent more than two hours in instruction on using the ESS. We tracked steps of a manuscript from submission of the abstract to the publication of the manuscript on OnlineFirst. The Editors suggested a number of improvements which will be implemented right now.

Due to the incredible interest the Editors have shown, the Meeting was both a success and a true pleasure.