

Editorial: Introducing *Operations Management Research*: Advancing practice through theory

Jack R. Meredith · Patrick R. McMullen

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A couple of years ago, one of us was a co-author on a paper presenting the results of a nice little operations management (OM) research study. Although narrowly focused, it came to some important conclusions and insights regarding an important concept in our field, but we were at a loss about where to try to publish it. It wasn't a massive study with multiple confounded variables that had to be teased out using sophisticated statistical techniques, nor did it present impressive, earth-shaking conclusions, so it seemed obvious that it wasn't suitable for the top journals in our field. Nor, some editors informed us, was it appropriate for the engineering or math or management oriented, journals where OM researchers sometimes publish their work. It seemed we had run out of alternatives.

Whereas the field of Finance has 46 or more journals that have the words Finance or Financial in their title, and somewhat the same is probably true for Marketing, Economics, and Management, in OM, there are only about five journals with the words Operations Management somewhere in their title. It thus seemed clear that there was a tremendous need, and opportunity, for additional

journals in our field. Moreover, since the demise¹ of the *Production & Inventory Management Journal* published by APICS (formerly, the American Production and Inventory Control Society) and the *Notes* section of the *Journal of Operations Management*, there has been no place for academic scholars to read about and publish small but high-quality OM research studies. Between just these two publications themselves, that means about 70 short OM research papers are not being published each year, or are perhaps being published but in less preferred or less appropriate journals. And since that time, the field has grown in both size and stature, while the pressure for publishing continues to increase.

As a result, we decided to take matters into our own hands and initiate an OM journal dedicated to smaller, focused papers that held particular promise of advancing practice, since OM is basically an applied field. The journal would not compete with existing A-level journals in the field but would instead aspire to publish shorter, more sharply focused work that exhibited solid methodological rigor. The journal would entertain all OM topics and all forms of research: survey, math modeling, case, field, qualitative, simulation, ethnography, hermeneutics, meta-analyses, and other such reputable methodologies. However, total manuscript length would be limited to 20 pages (including figures and tables) and the turnaround time would be fast, with a target maximum of 8 weeks. We

J. R. Meredith (✉) · P. R. McMullen
Wake Forest University,
Winston-Salem, NC, USA
e-mail: jack.meredith@mba.wfu.edu

P. R. McMullen
e-mail: Patrick.mcmullen@mba.wfu.edu

¹ We understand that APICS is resurrecting PIMJ but it will be oriented much more toward practitioners.

envisioned this as ultimately being a high-volume, widely-read journal since it would be publishing a great many papers on every topic in OM and thus of interest to every OM researcher regardless of their particular research area.

Our proposal for *OMR* went out to several publishers but Springer LLC was the most enthusiastic about our concept and the future of such a journal. Springer saw the same opportunity for tremendous growth in the recognition and stature of this journal over the years and they were willing to support us in this endeavor in multiple and generous ways. We thus signed a contract with them. Initial plans were for two issues in 2008, four issues in 2009, and then expanding to whatever the market need is.

As noted earlier, since operations management is an *applied* discipline it is the aim of *OMR* to promote research that advances both the theory *and* practice of operations management. Hence, each regular paper published in *OMR* must make a clear contribution to the science *and* practice of operations management and include discussion of the potential of the research for advancing OM theory as well as its application. Therefore, the domain of the journal will NOT include the following:

- Teaching topics or cases,
- Engineering/technical issues,
- Software applications,
- Literature reviews,
- Applications of operations theory to practice but without generalizable insights,
- Practice-based lessons for operations but with no theoretical insights,
- Extensions of operations theory with no practical application, or
- Quantitative models without application to advance both operations management theory *and* practice.

OMR will also occasionally publish *Academic Notes*, special papers that address issues concerning research methods, the direction of the OM field, and other such topics of particular interest to academicians.

The editorial structure of *OMR* consists of two co-Editors-in-Chief (EICs) who primarily administer the journal, an Editorial Assistant at the home office, an Editorial Oversight Board (EOB) of half a dozen well-recognized scholars in the field who monitor the progress and administration of the journal and handle any EIC transitions, and about three dozen Area Editors (AEs) who process the papers and have complete Accept–Reject authority.

The procedure for handling a paper is as follows. The paper is submitted on-line to the Springer Editorial Manager® (EM) website, a fully web-enabled online manuscript submission and review system for authors, editors, and reviewers of *OMR*. The EM submission and review system offers easy and straightforward login and

submission procedures and supports a wide range of submission file formats. It also offers authors the option to track the progress of the review process of manuscripts in real time. When entering EM for the *first* time, an author must register. To submit a paper, the author will next need to choose one or more Area Categories and Research Paradigms from the Classifications list for the paper. The initial submission of the paper requires that the cover page be submitted as a separate file from the rest of the paper since all papers are blind-reviewed. Tables and figures should be included within the paper unless one or more requires a separate file for some reason, which are provided for this purpose (revised papers will require three files, the two above plus the response to the criticisms and comments on the paper).

Submissions may initially use any good academic style or format but are limited to 20 manuscript pages in length including figures and tables, though appendices can be added as needed. If and when the paper is conditionally accepted, authors will be required to put the paper into *OMR* style and format. In spite of the focus on short papers, appendices (published only in the *on-line* version of the journal) can accompany each paper for space-consuming information such as detailed descriptions of case organizations, extensive statistical validity and reliability tests, proofs of theorems, or complex mathematical models, thus allowing focused studies with lengthy details an opportunity to get published as a very readable, short article. See www.springer.com/12063 for more information, and especially the pdf “Important Information for Authors” highlighted in blue at the submission website www.editorialmanager.com/omra. Manuscripts for *OMR* should be double spaced with 12-point font and 1-in. margins around an 8 1/2×11 in. page. Any appendix tables and figures should continue the numbering from the main text or preceding appendix and follow the same style as the main text. All appendices and exhibits should be referred to in the main text as needed—e.g., “The correlation matrix is given in Table 7 of online Appendix B: Validity Tables.” (note that this may require quoting a table or figure out of order).

After a paper is submitted through EM, it will be reviewed by one of the EICs to see if it meets the content and length requirements of *OMR*. If not, it will be Desk Rejected with an explanation to the author. If it passes, it will then be assigned to an Area Editor (AE) to handle, who is responsible for two reviews and has full Accept–Reject authority. The author should receive a response from the EIC within 8 weeks which will be either Reject, Revise, or Conditional Accept, as suggested by the AE. There will be at least two reviews of the paper, which will appear in EM in either the Comments to the Author box or as separate downloadable files, or possibly one or more of each. The

comments from the AE will explain the decision, and if a revision is requested, how to revise the paper to make it acceptable for *OMR*. The author will have 90 days to make the revision and resubmit the paper or else it will be treated like a new submission.

Revised papers will have three parts to submit, as described earlier. This time the author should receive a response in somewhat less than 8 weeks. If another Revision is requested, the author has 45 days to again revise the paper since this revision should be substantially less effort than before. The next AE decision will then be either Reject or Conditional Accept—there are no third revisions, although the AE may suggest some further minor changes to consider while the paper is being converted to meet *OMR*'s formatting and style requirements. Once there is a decision to Conditional Accept the paper, the only remaining step will be to put the paper in *OMR*'s style and format within 45 days. Once the style and format of the final submission are acceptable, the paper will then be Final Accepted by the EIC. At this time, a Consent to Publish and Transfer of Copyright form (see link on the EM website) must be signed by one of the authors and mailed or faxed as instructed on the form.

The following *OMR* style requirements are to achieve "Final Acceptance" status once the paper has been "Conditional Accepted."

- *Title page*: The title page of each manuscript should include the article title; authors' names, affiliations, addresses, and e-mails; plus the name, address, e-mail, telephone, and fax number of the person to whom proofs and reprint requests should be addressed. Acknowledgments go at the end of the paper, as noted further below.
- *Abstract*: The page following the title page should repeat the title and then include an abstract of up to 150 words describing such things as the purpose, methods, data, results, and conclusions of the study.
- *Key words*: Following the abstract, four to six key words or terms including some from the classifications list in Editorial Manager® for the purpose of indexing.
- *Text*: Do not use endnotes and try to minimize the use of footnotes. The text of the article generally includes an organization somewhat along the following lines: introduction, literature, methods, data source, results, discussion, conclusions, acknowledgments, and references. These are followed by the figures and tables, and then any supplementary electronic appendices with their own text, figures, and tables. Three levels of headings are available, all left-justified and numbered, as shown in the following example: **2 First level section**, **2.1 Second level sub-section**, **2.1.1 Third level sub-sub-section**.
- *Acknowledgments*: At the end of the paper, prior to the References, add acknowledgements to funding agencies, individuals that helped you with the paper, and so on, but do NOT thank the editors or reviewers of the journal—that is their job.
- *References*: Reference callouts in the text (and appendices) use the "author (date)" format: "Brown (1998a, 1998b) states that...", "Brown and Smith (2005) note...", "Researchers (e.g., Thompson 1990) have shown...". If there are more than two authors use et al. following the first author's name: Brown et al. (2002). In the double-spaced References section, list the authors alphabetically using the punctuation-light Basic Harvard referencing style as follows:
 - Deming WE (2000) Out of the crisis. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA
 - Green LV, Kolesar PJ, Whitt W (2007) Coping with time-varying demand when setting staffing requirements for a service system. *Production and Operations Management* 16:13–39 [omit issue number (in parentheses following the volume) unless essential.]
- *Illustration Style*: Please use tables for any material that can be typeset, reserving the term "figure" for material that has been drawn. Each figure and table (including those in appendices) should be mentioned in the text and numbered consecutively (including appendices) using Arabic numerals. Specify the desired location of each figure and table in the text with a callout. Each figure and table must have a caption at the top in bold, e.g., "Fig 1 The product-process matrix" or "Table 4 Correlation matrix." Identify all abbreviations, notes, and symbols beneath the figure or table. You must obtain permission to use all tables and figures that have already been published. Suggested figure formats are TIFF, GIF, EPS, PPT, and Postscript. Files should be at least 300 dpi.
- *Equations*: Left-justify equations and number them in parentheses, right-justified.

After the paper is Final Accepted, Springer will provide pdf proofs electronically. The provisional page numbers given on the proofs may be referred to during the correction procedure. However, the final page numbers are inserted by the publisher when an issue is ready to go to press. The author is entitled to formal corrections of printer's errors only. Substantial changes in content, e.g. new results, updated values, a new title, or different authorship are not allowed. The proofread copy should be returned to the Publisher within 48 h.

One complimentary copy of the relevant issue is supplied for each author. Thirty (30) offprints in total are also provided free of charge. Orders for additional offprints can be placed by returning the order form with the

corrected proofs. When the author orders additional off-prints, a pdf file of the article is included for the author's personal use.

To summarize the history of *OMR* to date, the timeline of events is described chronologically below:

29 December 2006: Following about a year of planning, Jack Meredith and Patrick McMullen signed a contract with Springer LLC to publish the journal *Operations Management Research: Advancing Practice through Theory*.

January 2007: An Editorial Oversight Board (EOB) of six professionals was established, with Robert Markland as the Chair for the coming year. The purpose of this board is to oversee the work of the editors and the editorial office, maintain the investment of Springer in this property, and offer suggestions to advance the standing and appeal of the journal.

Feb.–April 2007: A set of 34 Area Editors (AEs) around the globe was contacted and agreed to work as AEs for the journal. Besides the U.S.A., distinguished academics from China (Hong Kong), Australia, Italy, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Finland were willing to serve, attracted by the Aims and Scope of the journal.

March 2007: The Editors-in-Chief (EICs) and the Editorial Assistant (EA) were trained on the software *Editorial Manager*.

April–June 2007: The Editorial Office trained the AEs on *Editorial Manager*.

4 May 2007: The cover design was finalized, after considerable work over the preceding months. This then allowed Springer to apply for an ISSN number, which had to precede other milestones such as a website for the journal.

May 2007: The TIFFs for the cover were sent to the Editorial Office where an *OMR* email address and autosignatures for the EICs and EA were constructed.

14 June 2007: The ISSN number was issued. Meanwhile, considerable work was proceeding on the format of the website.

June 2007: The website was completed and went live.

3 July 2007: *Editorial Manager* “went live.” Nevertheless, as experience was gained, it was found necessary to continue making changes in the letters, instructions, and other elements of *Editorial Manager*.

12 August 2007: Papers were invited from all the AEs.

15 August 2007: The first paper was submitted to *OMR*.

2 November 2007: The first paper was Final Accepted.

6 November 2007: *OMR*/Springer sponsored a breakfast meeting with AEs at the INFORMS Annual Conference. EIC Pat McMullen, two Springer representatives, and 6 AEs attended. An update on progress was given and questions answered.

18 November 2007: *OMR* sponsored a luncheon at the Decision Sciences Annual Conference in Phoenix, AZ,

reserving 24 spaces. EIC Jack Meredith and 27 AEs and EOB members attended. An update on progress was given and questions answered.

21 December 2007: The first paper was approved in page proof format for *OMR*.

31 December 2007: Six papers have been submitted to *OMR*: one accepted, one desk rejected, three under first revision, and one under review. The statistics for the average number of days between critical times are given below.

Initial submission to first response to author	33
Initial submission to Final Acceptance	79
Submission of revision to response to author	15
Conditional Acceptance to Final Acceptance	38

As we look back at our experience handling submissions in the first year, we have some thoughts about the types of papers and topics we would particularly like to see submitted for publication consideration in the future. First, as noted earlier, we are looking for papers that nicely blend academic insight with clear potential for application in practice. However, some papers are probably too “high level” for *OMR* in the sense that it would be difficult for a manager to see how to apply their insights. This could be due to the complexity of the interactions of the variables in the study, or the abstractness of the situation or factors being investigated, or other such reasons. We particularly value straightforward studies of well-defined situations with clear, understandable factors being studied and analyzed. If the description of the study is difficult to understand, or it is hard to keep all the variables straight, or especially, if the eyes start to cross or start closing, this is a symptom that the paper may be too “high level.”

Second, we have included in this first issue papers that illustrate the range of types of papers we are interested in. Some are more mathematical, some are more philosophical, some are more behavioral. All however, balance their orientation with clear applicability to practice. For example, Guide et al. (“The optimal disposition...”) investigate an increasingly important “green” issue: how a remanufacturer can determine whether to rework a product return or salvage it based on a threshold processing time. Using two real-world data sets in a brief *math model*, they show how to calculate the threshold value. Boone et al. (“Critical challenges...: A Delphi study”) offers a completely different type of study—a *Delphi interview/survey* of service parts managers that identify 18 difficult service parts issues and the ten top challenges facing these managers. Burke et al. (“Optimal requirement allocation...”) employs a *branch and bound* model to help an office products distributor obtain a set quantity of an item at minimum cost from a group of supply-limited vendors who each offer a quantity discount. Marsh et al. (“A pull

system...”) uses an *experiment* to determine how well a pull system works in a service setting for knowledge-based work, complete with the irritating, random interruptions that typify such work. Narasimhan et al. (“Relational norms...”) *surveys* managers seeking to achieve superior supplier performance through investing in either relationship and trust building or through supplier development initiatives. de Treville et al. (“Constructing useful...”) moves to another realm, *building theory*, and takes on the case of Six Sigma, exposing its flaws in terms of constructs, assumptions, and relationships. Ho et al. (“Optimization of facility...”) *combines quantitative and qualitative* factors through the analytic hierarchy process and goal programming to best locate a computer manufacturer’s warehouses so as to maximize the benefits to both themselves and their customers. Zhang et al. (“Project management infrastructure...”) collects empirical data from 53 supplier plants of a Fortune 500 high-tech electronics manufacturer and uses *regression* to evaluate the effect of strategic project selection and project management infrastructure on operational performance improvements.

In addition to the types of papers that are sought, there are some particular topics that we consider relevant and desirable. As both the efficiency and quality of manufactured goods have enjoyed improvement over the last several years, the research emphasis has shifted to supply chains and logistics. We expect this journal will probably reflect this change in direction. And as outsourcing continues to be directed to labor pools with lower wage demands and equal skill sets, we expect articles will reflect this phenomenon as well. The quality of services in several industries has been documented to show a steady decline. Health care, retail, and transportation are examples of this. The editors

consider service quality an important area, and expect to see more articles in this topic as well.

Jack R. Meredith is Professor of Management and Broyhill Distinguished Scholar and Chair in Operations at the Babcock Graduate School of Management at Wake Forest University. He received his undergraduate degrees in engineering and mathematics from Oregon State University and his PhD and MBA from the University of California, Berkeley. He has worked for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Ampex Corporation, Hewlett-Packard Corporation, Douglas Aircraft Company, and TRW Systems. His current research interests are in the areas of research methodology, project management, and production processes. His research articles have been published in *Journal of Operations Management*, *Production/Operations Management*, *Management Science*, *Operations Research*, *Sloan Management Review*, *Strategic Management Journal*, *Decision Sciences*, and others. He has co-authored multiple textbooks that are popular for college classes including *Operations Management for MBAs* (Wiley), *Project Management: A Managerial Approach* (Wiley), and *Project Management in Practice* (Wiley). He was Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Operations Management* from 1995–2002, the founding editor of *Operations Management Review*, and former production/operations management series editor for John Wiley & Sons, Inc. He is currently a member of the editorial advisory board for *International Journal of Operations and Production Management*.

Patrick R. McMullen is an Associate Professor of Management at Wake Forest University’s Babcock Graduate School of Management. He earned his Ph.D. in Operations Management from the University of Oregon. He has held faculty positions at the University of Oregon, the University of Maine, Auburn University and the Harvard University Summer School. Prior to an academic career he was an industrial engineer in the food and automotive industries. His research interests relate to the optimization of production systems.