Editorial: State of the journal, February 2010

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We have now completed our second full year of publication and, looking at the statistics regarding submissions and results (described further below), it appears that we are finally stabilizing—several papers are in process as compared to the previous two years. Launching a new journal was more volatile than we had suspected, and getting appropriate submissions was much more difficult than we expected—more comments on this below. In summary, although Volume 2 for 2009 was intentionally rather thin, the journal now appears to be in good shape for the future. We have 10 papers almost ready for the next issue (a double issue, we suspect), 14 papers in the revise-and-resubmit phase, and 5 in the initial-submission review stage. With new conferences at POMS, EurOMA, Academy of Management, INFORMS, and DSI coming up, we should be in good shape for the future as well.

In terms of market reception to our efforts (that is, are we profitable or not?), we have been trying to get a handle on this but the marketplace is not as straightforward as it used to be with individual personal subscriptions and individual library subscriptions. These days, publishers make most of their income through "syndicates" and "packages" of electronic subscriptions where various journals are bundled together and libraries subscribe to the packages they desire. [Sounds a bit like those nasty "bundles" of mortgage securities and CDOs (collateralized debt obligations), doesn't it?] As our publisher, Springer, explains: "Consortia, multi-site,

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and site licenses are all referred to as 'online deals.' In 2008, OMR was covered in 68 such 'online deals,' resulting in 3262 institutions having exposure to OMR." Geographically, those institutions break down as follows: 8 in Africa, 286 in the Americas, 730 in Australasia, and 2238 in Europe.

Given that we are "exposed" to over three thousand universities and other institutions, that seems rather decent for just two years of publishing. Surprisingly, there seems to be a lot more OMR "interest" (or at least "deals") in Europe than in the Americas. We don't know if this is due to non-American institutions being more interested in electronic access (maybe American institutions still prefer, and have the funds to pay for, hard copy subscriptions?), or if the appeal of a journal with material relevant to, and readable by, real managers is of more interest to non-American researchers. We note that authorship to date has been almost even between U.S.A. authors and non-US authors, although the preponderance of submissions is from non-US authors. This also means, unfortunately, that non-US authors are getting rejected more often than US authors. Why?

Looking over our records, there are a few reasons, all primarily related to desk rejections. Many papers have been desk rejected because they fail to offer value in terms of *both* practice and theory. Such papers typically do have theoretical value, but their value to practitioners either falls far short or is simply non-existent. These papers usually come in the form of an elaborate mathematical model being presented, which includes proofs, derivations, lemmas and the like. These rejected papers also frequently employ data sets that are of the "toy" variety. That is, data sets that are synthesized to illustrate the model of interest, but do not shed any light on real-world implementations of the problem. This is not to suggest an aversion to papers including mathematical models. Mathematical models are

certainly welcomed, provided that the models can be coupled with tangible applications that are of value to practitioners. It is also more valuable if the data set contains real data collected from a specific practitioner or organization, as opposed to a data set from a "toy" problem or a previous theoretical publication. Occasionally we also have to desk reject papers whose English is simply too difficult to understand, whose presentation is too sloppy, or where the contribution is negligible or non-existent.

Below are the three annual reports we have turned in to our Editorial Oversight Board and the publisher since we signed the OMR contract with Springer in 2006. We include them so readers can see the evolution of the journal and compare statistics across the three years.

1 *Operations Management Research* 2009 annual editorial report

1.1 Section A: Events of the year

We published OMR twice last year, the first being the final issue of 2008 (two issues were planned for the first year), and then a final publication comprising all four issues of 2009. Although we submitted the final issue of 2008 in early February of 2009, production delays led to it not being printed until about mid-2009. Springer then made a command decision for all their journals that they would publish whatever was accepted by Nov. 1 as all the remaining issues of the year so that all their journals were "caught up" and 2010 would have a fresh start. Hence, all the accepted OMR papers were published together in December as the combined Issues 1–4 for 2009.

So the good news now is twofold: not only are we caught up with the publication dates but from intensely scanning conference proceedings and inviting authors to submit their papers to OMR, we now have a lot of excellent papers both accepted for the next issue(s) and in-process for the rest of the year. We believe Springer's intent for 2010 is to publish two double issues, with Issues 1 and 2 coming out soon (we are about ready to go to press as we write this in mid-February) and then Issues 3 and 4 coming out later in the year, probably early fall.

To help publicize the journal, last year we added eight Regional Editors (REs) to cover Canada, China, Northern Europe, Southern Europe, India, Latin America, the Pacific Rim, and then the Mediterranean, Middle East, and Asia, jointly. The task of these regional editors is to attend conferences in their region, distribute OMR flyers, contact authors who have papers or are presenting papers that would fit OMR's aims and scope, and publicize the journal in whatever ways they can. We have also been getting 200 additional copies of each printing of OMR for publicity

purposes, beyond those sent to all paper authors, all Area Editors (AEs), all REs, and all Editorial Oversight Board (EOB) members. We also send copies to every senior author we invite from EurOMA, POMS, DSI, AOM, and INFORMS to encourage them to submit their conference paper to OMR (all papers in the proceedings are reviewed for appropriateness in OMR). Although in the past, we didn't get many submissions from these invitations, in 2009 we were fortunate to wind up with an unexpected deluge and had to scramble for AEs to handle all the work. Thankfully, many current AEs and REs volunteered to take on additional work, and even some of the EOB members took on some AE responsibilities—many thanks to all those speaking up to get us through our unexpected success in encouraging submissions.

As we reported last year, we were going to try some other avenues to increase submissions to OMR, including special issues, guest editorials, and advertising in some of the society newsletters. We did advertise twice and we are currently working with someone on a different type of Special Issue involving managers but it is still too early to tell if it will work out. We did have some luck with Guest Editorials last year, being able to publish three excellent and interesting pieces. Once again, we would like to encourage any AE, RE, or member of the EOB to contact us if they have an editorial piece they are interested in writing, or would like to guest edit a special issue on any OM topic that would include a strong practice element and be of high interest to managers.

1.2 Section B: Manuscript statistics

The statistics in the table on the next page are fairly close to those we had in 2008, indicating some tendency toward stability, except for percentages of rejections, where the desk rejections have gone down and the processed rejections have gone up. The reason the desk rejections are down is because in 2008, Springer did a publicity "blast" (the formal term) and we received a deluge of inappropriate math-intensive papers that were promptly desk rejected. This year there was no publicity blast but, as noted above, we instead had a deluge of (solicited) conference papers that were much more appropriate for the journal but frequently didn't pass our reviewing process. Overall, our acceptance rate of 19% this year is almost identical to the 18% last year.

Our average "response time to initial submissions" (43 days) is also close to last year's value of 39 days, but during the deluge of incoming papers, we lost control of Area Editor response times and in too many cases exceeded our promise of 8 weeks (56 days). As we noted in our 2007 invitations to AE candidates for the journal, to meet a promised response date of 8 weeks usually requires that the

mean response time be 4 weeks (28 days), though we were willing to allow 5 weeks (35 days) and try to make up the extra week on home office processing time. Clearly, 43 is not bad, a little over a month, but it's the extreme value of the distribution that violates our 8-week promise. Authors have been forgiving, however.

Measure (cutoff for all measures is Dec. 31)	Number, or Average in days
# Papers submitted in 2009	73
# Papers accepted (% of submissions) in 2009	14 (19%*)
# Papers desk rejected (% of submissions) in 2009	21 (29%*)
# Papers rejected (% of submissions) in 2009	20 (27%*)
Time (range) from initial Submission to Response to Author for non-desk rejected papers (calendar days)	43 (7–99)
Time (range) from Submission of Revisions to Response to Author	18 (0–63)
Time (range) from Conditional Acceptance to Final Acceptance**	6 (1–10)
Time (range) from initial Submission to Final Acceptance**	95 (40–204)

* %s do not add to 100 due to papers still in process, paper decisions about submissions from prior year, withdrawn papers, etc.

** Includes revision time with the author, days

We should also note that the problem has not been with the outside reviewers. Sometimes they have been a bit late, but most of the AEs have stayed on top of them to get their reviews in as promised, some AEs even going to the trouble of requesting *two* outside reviews *just in case* one doesn't deliver on time. Unfortunately, most of the delays have been due to our inability to reach, or get a response from, the responsible AE. Sometimes this has been our fault, finding out that the email address we have been using is no longer valid, simply being too busy to notice that an AE hasn't responded in 4 weeks, or spending weeks trying to find a willing AE, each requiring a week to hear from. We are now trying to monitor this more frequently in that if we don't hear from an AE in a week or so after asking them to handle a paper, we send a personal email to him or her asking if there is a problem. With such a short turnaround time, we don't have the luxury of waiting until crises have passed, or the semester ends; we need to find a willing AE quickly. In some cases, particularly with AEs new to the process, the problem has been with them trying to understand the Editorial Manager web-based manuscript-processing system. Some folks seem to get it without a problem and others tear their (and our) hair out over it. Our instructions in the manuscript processing request letter about what the AE needs to do, and how, is supposed to be helpful in this regard. If it is not, please let us know

what needs to be clarified, and where you are having trouble with Editorial Manager (EdMgr). You can also request help at any time from Aironne Rivera at aironne. rivera@springer.com, who is very helpful, works every weekday, and usually gets back to you the same day, or next day at the latest.

Next, the average "time from submission of a revision to our response" is considerably shorter (than for initial submissions) at 18 days, similar to last year's 16, though again the extreme value is too long. The main reason this value is so much less than the "first submission to response" value of 43 is because the AE does not need to go back to the outside reviewer(s) and wait for their response; they can evaluate for themselves the authors' explanation of their response to the criticisms and decide if it is adequate or more needs to be done. Clearly, some AEs just go over the paper immediately and get it off their "to do" list ("0 days" at the minimum of the range), while others try to find a slot in the near future to spend a couple of hours on it. Only a few seem to put the paper out of their mind until EdMgr reminds them that it is due.

Once the AE recommends Conditional Acceptance, they are done with the paper and it is our job as Editors-In-Chief to make sure the finishing touches are completed and the paper is returned promptly, which in 2009 was, at most, a little over a week. Our assumption appears to have been correct that once an author receives a conditional acceptance, they move the paper to the front of their work-queue and get it back promptly to obtain a Final Acceptance. The reason for two levels of acceptance was for Conditional to clear all *required* improvements and Final was initially meant to be used to make sure the grammar, referencing style, sectioning style, abstract, and other such polishing and stylistic matters were done correctly. However, we have lately also been using this final check-off as a way to unburden the AE from doing another round to check their suggested final requests for small recommended improvements that would be nice to see but are not absolutely necessary to make the paper publishable.

Our last statistic is the time span between submission and final acceptance. Usually journals don't include the time spent with the author making revisions (which can sometimes take up to a year) but we thought our statistic, which here does include author revision time, was rather interesting, averaging about 3 months, and extending up to about 7 months (some were less than 6 weeks!). In the 2008 annual report we also included the time from Final Acceptance to hard copy publication (153 days in 2008), but we dropped that this year since: 1) we forgot to make a note of when the hard copies actually appeared, and 2) the publication schedule of the hard copies was erratic in both directions in 2009. As we get some stability in the schedule and process, we could reinitiate this statistic as well.

2 *Operations Management Research* 2008 annual editorial report

2.1 Section A: Events of the year

The big event of 2008 was clearly getting the first issue out last September. We ordered 200 additional copies for publicity purposes beyond those sent to all paper authors, all AEs, and all EOB members. Springer gave out many copies at the conferences where they exhibited and we also sent copies to every senior author we invited from EurOMA, POMS, DSI, and INFORMS to help persuade them to submit their conference paper to OMR. The yield on those papers submitted has been running about 50% acceptances. However, most of the invitations were not acted upon. In some cases, the authors sent their papers to other journals, but most of the time it appears that there wasn't yet a paper about the topic but just a set of slides for the conference. We are hopeful that as the authors finish the work on their research, they will still consider submitting the paper to OMR.

We continue having some minor problems with AEs trying to use the Editorial Manager paper processing system, especially when the Editorial Manager engineers make changes in the system without informing us. However, Springer support in using the system has been superb and we always solve the problems within a day or two. We continue to meet our promised response to the authors of 8 weeks, but we spend a lot of our time trying to push just a few papers through the process, often when the outside reviewer doesn't respond as requested, but also when we have trouble getting a response from the selected AE which we are finding is much more problematic.

More seriously, we have been having trouble getting sufficient appropriate paper submissions for the journal. After a recent Springer publicity "blast," we did get an onslaught of submissions but unfortunately they were primarily pure math modeling papers that had nothing to do with practice and we desk rejected the great majority of them. We currently attend the EurOMA, POMS, DSI, and INFORMS annual conferences and are hoping to add AOM as well, to increase our potential submissions. And we are considering some new approaches to increase submissions, including Guest Editorials, Special Issues, Regional Editors, and working more closely with authors to more prominently address the utility of their work for practicing managers. However, when we do get a paper submitted that we feel is close enough to OMR's aims and scope to put into process, we hope the AE in charge of the paper will do their best to shepherd the paper and authors successfully through the process rather than simply rejecting it, unless of course there is really no hope for the paper.

2.2 Section B: Manuscript statistics

Measure (cutoff for all measures is Dec. 31)	Number, or Average in days
Papers submitted in 2008	66
Papers accepted (% of submissions) in 2008	12 (18%)
Papers desk rejected (% of submissions) in 2008	37 (56%)
Papers rejected (% of submissions) in 2008	6 (9%*)
Time from initial Submission to Response to Author for non-desk rejected papers (calendar days)	39
Time from Submission of Revisions to Response to Author	16
Time from Conditional Acceptance to Final Acceptance	17
Time from initial Submission to Final Acceptance	115
Time from Final Acceptance to hard copy Publication for issues published this year (only Vol. 1, No. 1)	153

* %s do not add to 100 due to papers still in process, paper decisions about submissions from prior year, withdrawn papers, etc.

3 *Operations Management Research* 2007 annual editorial report

3.1 Section A: Events of the year

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 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.

3 July 2007: *Editorial Manager* "went live." Nevertheless, we have found it necessary to make a considerable number of changes in the letters, instructions, and other

elements of *Editorial Manager* since we are using it in an unusual way (primarily, having AEs also submit a review).

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 auto-signatures 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.

12 August 2007: Papers were invited from all the AEs, but NOT the general public.

15 August 2007: The first paper was submitted to *OMR*. (See table of statistics.)

2 November 2007: The first paper was Final Accepted.

6 November 2007: OMR/Springer sponsors a breakfast meeting with AEs at the INFORMS Annual Conference. EIC Pat McMullen, Publishers Gary Folven and Concette Seminara-Kennedy, and 6 AEs attend. An update on progress was given and questions answered.

18 November 2007: OMR sponsors a luncheon at the Decision Sciences Annual Conference in Phoenix, AZ, reserving 24 spaces. EIC Jack Meredith and 27 AEs attend (3 others were unable to attend at the last minute, fortunately). 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: 1 accepted, 1 desk rejected, 3 under first revision, and 1 under review.

For the future: Following the new year, Calls for Papers have been sent to DSI's *Decision Line*, POMS *Chronicle*, Academy of Management's *Perspectives*, INFORMS *OR/MS Today* ("People in the News" column), and EIASM/Euroma's web site soliciting papers for the journal. We hope to get considerably more papers submitted soon based on promises made at the conferences as well as the publication of the Calls for Papers in the various newsletters.

In summary, it would appear that our process is efficient and, with sufficient papers coming in, we shouldn't have any trouble getting the two issues of OMR published in 2008. The only serious problem we have had is when one outside reviewer had to return to India when his mother had sudden health problems and, although he had completed the review, he had not uploaded it into the EdMgr system and was unable to do it from India. We did finally get it and got a response to the author in 7 weeks, one week before our 8-week promise. We have been able to respond to the authors of every other paper in about half that time (our goal).

One recurring problem we seem to have is the AE for a paper picking another AE off EdMgr instead of finding an outside reviewer on their own. As the AEs get busy with their own papers, we don't want them having to be reviewers on other AE's papers also. Finally, it has been quite a bit of work getting all these systems and procedures established, with communication running between our Editorial Office, Springer's U.S. office, and recently, Springer's copyeditors in Spain. But I think we are finally all on the same page, and look forward to things running more smoothly in the future.

3.2 Section B: Manuscript statistics

Measure (cutoff for all measures is Dec. 31)	Number, or Average in days
Papers submitted in 2007	4
Papers accepted in 2007	1
Papers desk rejected in 2007	1
Papers rejected in 2007	1
Time from initial Submission to Response to Author	33
Time from AE agree until response to EIC	27
Time from Reviewer agree until response to AE	25
Time from Submission of Revisions to Response to Author	15
Time from Conditional Acceptance to Final Acceptance	38
Time from initial Submission to Final Acceptance	79

3.3 Section C: Potential items for future inclusion

1. Publicity—as the journal gets started, sources for publicity will be important such as announcements/calls in newsletters, presentations at conferences, meetings of the AEs and EOB, flyers, gratis copies of the journal, and so on. We might detail these in the annual report.
2. Topics for Editorials—feedback from the EOB might give the EICs insight into what the readership, or field in general, would like to hear about from the EICs, which could be included in Editorials in the issues.
3. Popularity of Topics—we could note the direction of paper topics in the journal. At this early stage, we are getting papers on a variety of topics but we could start seeing too many, or too few, of certain topics, research methods, styles, or whatever. For instance, as we started up we received a lot of "essay" types of papers that we rejected as inappropriate. We suspect that we will soon be deluged with a lot of "incremental math models" types of papers, though we haven't seen any yet.

4. Springer Info—There may be information from Springer, such as subscription rates and distributions that would be of interest. As well, Springer may have information about external perceptions of the journal that we do not have, such as hits on the website.
5. Associations—It may be of value for the journal to be "associated" with particular societies, institutes, and other groups to facilitate our aims. Progress in these areas, or suggestions from the EOB, would be of interest.
6. Editorial Office Changes—Changes in the EICs, Editorial Assistant, EOB, or set of AEs could be noted, as well as changes in the Springer office. For instance, the Springer contact in Boston is now Concetta Saminara-Kennedy, following the retirement of Gary Folven who was instrumental in getting us hooked up with Springer and getting the journal off the ground.
7. Future Directions—Ideas being considered for the future of the journal may also be discussed for feedback by the EOB, such as types of papers to encourage/discourage, changes in policies, changes in the Website or submission software, tightening up standards, changes in the process of handling the papers, and so on.