

Acoustical Society of America Publications: Spotlight on Quality

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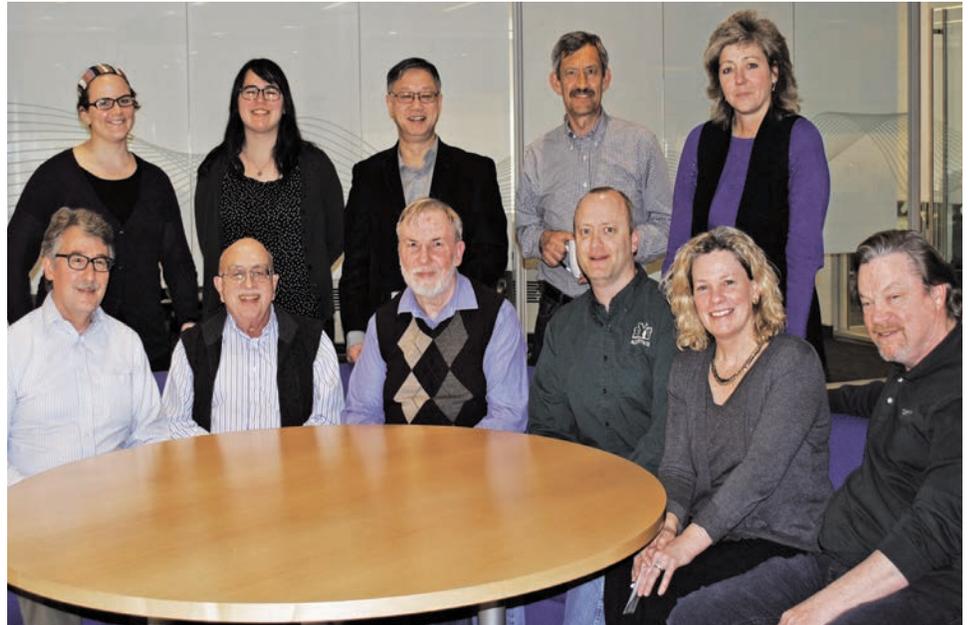


Figure 1: Acoustical Society of America (ASA) publications personnel present at the March 15, 2018, Publications Summit held in Melville, New York. Seated (left to right): Charlie Church (editor, *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* [JASA] Express Letters [EL]), Arthur Popper (editor, *Acoustics Today*), Jim Lynch (ASA editor in chief), Kent Gee (editor, POMA), Helen Wall Murray (manuscript manager, POMA), and Dan Farrell (ASA Web office manager). Standing (left to right): Kat Setzer (editorial coordinator, *Acoustics Today*), Liz Bury (managing editor, JASA and JASA-EL), Ning Xiang (associate editor, JASA), Vladimir Ostashev (associate editor, JASA), and Kelly Quigley (manuscript manager, JASA). Missing are Adrian KC Lee (associate editor, JASA), who was en route to Australia, and Mary Guillemette (ASA publications manager) due to her being “snowed in” on Cape Cod, Massachusetts; KC and Mary called in for the meeting.

Introduction

Everyone wants “quality” in the things that they have and use, but really, what does that simple word mean? From experience, we know that the definition of quality varies from item to item and from person to person. And we know that quality is usually multidimensional. In a car, some combination of looks, reliability, comfort, gas mileage, cost, accessories, etc. will define quality for a buyer. In academic publications, quality will be made up of a different set of factors. Our first goal in this article is to explore just what constitutes quality specifically for the publications of the Acoustical Society of America (ASA). After doing this, we then take a long look in the mirror to see how our main peer-reviewed journal, *The Journal of*

the Acoustical Society of America (JASA) and its special section *JASA Express Letters (JASA-EL)*, measure up to current quality standards. And finally, after seeing where we are, we look toward the future. What do we want to do and where do we want to be in 1 year, 5 years, and (for the Acoustical Society's 100th birthday) 10 years down the road?

As mentioned, our main focus in this article is on *JASA* and *JASA-EL*. But before getting to these publications, we need to mention what our other two publications, *Acoustics Today (AT)* and *Proceedings of Meetings on Acoustics (POMA)*, bring to our overall "suite" of publications.

AT gives ASA publications a popular magazine that can reach a much broader audience than just acoustics practitioners (but including them), covers the full range of acoustics topics, informs people about the ASA and other topics of interest, and is distributed both free online and in an attractive glossy paper format. *AT* is, in a sense, the ASA and acoustics "public ambassador." This is a very desirable niche to fill.

POMA is the ASA conference proceedings journal. It is a lightly reviewed, free-access publication and gives authors who attend the ASA meetings or cosponsored meetings a quick and easy way to disseminate their ideas. *POMA* is a good tool for nonacademic acoustics practitioners as well as academics. Importantly, publishing in *POMA* does not constitute prepublication for any other ASA publication. *POMA*, like *AT*, has a strong function as an outreach tool as more and more cosponsored meetings, often outside the United States, are using it. These two publications, *POMA* and *AT*, give ASA publications a breadth and outreach capability that are not possible with strictly peer-reviewed, archival journals.

JASA, including its special section *JASA-EL*, is an archival and fully peer-reviewed journal. *JASA-EL* is designed for quickly reviewed and published "extended letter" research, whereas *JASA* is a full-length, historically well-known major journal. Both are similar in many ways and are published together, but they are not entirely the same. So the judgment of quality for each will be slightly different.

Before plunging into the details of quality, however, we owe the reader one more general explanation: specifically, who are the "we" that are referred to rather generously in this article (**Figure 1**)? The authors of this article are the four people who work in the ASA main publications office in Hyannis, Massachusetts, but they are only a small part of the "we" for ASA publications. "We" also consists of editors in Maryland,

Vermont, and Utah; publications personnel in the ASA main headquarters in Melville, New York, and in various cities in Massachusetts; and a large and extremely good staff of associate editors (AEs) located around the world. We are very much a team, and our publications are a team effort.

So, What Does Constitute Quality for the Journals?

Let's start the "quality definition" discussion for both *JASA* and *JASA-EL* by trying to list the factors that comprise quality in an archival journal. Just like in our automobile example, there are multiple qualities to consider in evaluating a journal, and the weighting factors differ from person to person and institution to institution, where the latter can be academic or industrial/government/commercial.

There exists today a vast literature devoted to the issue of journal quality; this is far from a new topic. Rather than trying to give even a brief overview of what journal quality is from this literature, let us instead cite something from a website produced by a typical vested stakeholder in journals, a library. In particular, we looked at the Boston College Libraries site and their article called "Assessing Journal Quality: Journal Quality" (Boston College Libraries, 2018). Libraries invest a major part of their budgets in journals and therefore are very concerned and critical parties in evaluating quality in order to decide which publications to purchase. There are many other vested parties in publication quality, including publishers, professional societies, authors, and readers, but as an example, libraries seem a fair and representative choice.

To begin, we quote the Boston College Libraries (2018) posting, "Traditional measures, such as peer review, impact factor, and the reputation of the journal, continue to be hallmarks within the academic community." It continues, "Increasingly, alternative metrics (sometimes referred to as "altmetrics") are being considered in evaluating journal quality, tracking the diffusion of scholarship through non-traditional sources such as blogs, social media, and other online systems." This posting, in addition to spelling out some prime and well-known journal quality metrics, also makes another very interesting point; the world of publications is rapidly changing and has now fully entered the "electronic media universe," and so more than just traditional metrics must be considered.

But this Boston College short list is just the tip of the iceberg; there are many other qualities and metrics to consider.

Our own (admittedly tailored) list includes (1) speed (in handling, review, revision, publication); (2) standard metrics other than impact factor (IF) such as acceptance rate, eigenfactor score (eigenfactor.org), cited half-life, usage, and immediacy index (all to be defined and discussed below); (3) altmetrics; (4) quality of reviews; (5) customer service and professional courtesy; (6) ease of submission and revision; (7) having a full suite of features (e.g., open access, multimedia, supplemental material); and (8) language services for international authors and others needing assistance. There are certainly many more items that can be added, and some academic articles list up to 35 different factors! But our short list, along with that from Boston College, includes the factors we need and should suffice for now.

Reputation, Speed, and Quantitative Metrics, Including Impact Factor: Where Do We Stand?

Having created a usable list of factors for determining the quality of publications like *JASA* and *JASA-EL*, let us now discuss these factors individually, concentrating on where our journals are at present.

We begin with the most intangible but perhaps the most important factor, a journal's reputation. The reputation of *JASA* (and, by association, *JASA-EL*) has been excellent since the inception of *JASA* in 1929 and continues to be so based on brief postpublication author surveys by our publisher, the American Institute of Physics (AIP) Publishing (AIPP), and our recent *JASA* author and reader survey conducted by KWF Consulting (Hager and Rivera, 2018). This is good news for us because a good reputation helps attract good authors, reviewers, and editors.

However, reputations are fragile things and must continually be earned and maintained. Our attitude at ASA publications is that *JASA* and *JASA-EL* are two of many good journals competing for high-quality material to publish and that we have to keep our standards high in all aspects of the publications enterprise to stay competitive.

Besides an author choosing to publish based on the reputation of the journal (assuming it is appropriate for the author's material), the two other most commonly asked questions by potential authors are (1) how fast is the journal editorial process and (2) what is the journal's IF? Since we recently published an *AT* article about the speed factors of *JASA* (Lynch and Lee, 2017), let us deal with that first because it is a fresh topic in our minds.

When James Lynch first came on as editor in chief in November 2014, perhaps the biggest criticism of *JASA* and *JASA-EL* was that speed to publication was, on average, far too slow and that some manuscripts could linger for unduly long times with little attention. This problem needed an immediate solution, and toward that, two strategies were pursued.

The first was hiring a full-time managing editor (Elizabeth "Liz" Bury), who, along with the publications staff, now carefully monitors the timelines and progress of all of our manuscripts and takes active steps to remind the pertinent editors, authors, reviewers, and others when one appears to be lagging. Understaffing was a problem that resulted in a slower system, and ASA publications has, with the help of the ASA's Executive Council, now mostly filled those needs with Liz and other hires.

The problem of the "mean time to publication" was addressed by doing a careful systems analysis of the stages of the publication process and identifying the significant delay areas for our publications. Time to first decision was the first piece addressed, with the time in review and the time in revision coming next. As far as the mean time to first decision goes, we can let the numbers speak for themselves. From about 100 days in 2015 and before, the mean time to first decision for *JASA* has come down to its (initial) goal of 60 days in 2017. And the time to accept decision for *JASA* has come down from about 200 days in 2016 (and a few years before) to 147 days in 2017, with our eventual goal being 120 days (4 months).

JASA-EL has shown similar improvement, coming down from 69 days in 2016 to 46 days in 2017 for a mean time to first decision and trimming the time to accept decision from 113 days in 2016 to 86 days in 2017. These are significant gains, and the editorial team is working to improve these gains even more.

Time in review and time in revision are currently being examined to see what possible gains can be made in these areas. But in the meantime, we carefully monitor the times spent in these areas, and our use of frequent "reminders" has helped speed them up already.

However, being the fastest journal around is *not* our ultimate goal; being the highest quality journal we can *is* our goal. This means that if we need to take some additional time to ensure that a manuscript is given proper review and treatment, we will concede some speed to quality.

Impact Factor

The next major item on the list is quantitative quality metrics, with IF being the most widely known, used and (in some cases) abused (Nature Editorial, 2016). Other important metrics include eigenfactor score, cited half-life, immediacy index, usage, and acceptance rate. Depending on what the user/evaluator of the journal wants, any one of these, or a weighted average of them, might be the best descriptor of the journal. But IF is by far the dominant player in this group, at least in the academic world. Without getting unduly technical, IF is a “measure of the frequency with which the ‘average article’ in a journal has been cited in a particular year or period” (see acousticstoday.org/impactfactor). Citations are considered a prime measure of an article’s academic importance, and so IF gets top billing. It is typically a two-year IF, but the longer five-year IF is also often seen.

The two-year IF for *JASA* over the past few years has hovered in the 1.5-1.6 range. This is below the 2.0 and above that is often quoted for “high-tier” journals. The five-year IF for 2016 was 1.850. This higher value is because *JASA* has a very long cited half-life (as will be discussed below). Improving the two-year IF is a serious consideration for *JASA* and *JASA-EL*, not because we consider the IF to be the ultimate, defining metric of a journal’s worth (we don’t) but because it is taken seriously as such by many authors, administrators, and potential employers when deciding where to publish or who to hire or promote. Given its extensive usage in the academic world, we need to do something about improving the IF. And indeed, we have a strategy for this.

The first part of our strategy has already been discussed, speeding up the publication process so that slow turnaround will not be a consideration discouraging good authors when they consider the journal in which they want to publish. The next part of our strategy, already being implemented, is to figure out what our IF is on a technical committee (TC) by TC basis (i.e., area by area), including Education and *JASA-EL*, rather than just looking at the integrated IF for *JASA*. The TCs represent very diverse areas of study, and the IF is often dependent on the specific area and its level of funding and activity (e.g., van Nierop, 2009). So it makes sense to look at this level of “granularity,” to use the current business term.

Our publisher, AIPP, provided us with the 2015 and 2016 IFs on this TC by TC basis, which we then averaged for each TC. We then asked each of the TCs to provide a list of 5 to 10 “competitor” journals to *JASA* in which their members also publish. We obtained the IFs for these journals, averaged them, and then compared the IFs with the individual

TCs. The results of this initial TC by TC study are still being digested and, until they are fully understood, will be internal to ASA publications. But they are very interesting, and we will continue to update and analyze such statistics over time. One result of the study that was immediately unambiguous was that the individual IF for *JASA-EL* (which was estimated by AIPP) was lower than expected. This was surprising, given that the popularity of *JASA-EL* with authors has increased recently, based on the numbers of submissions, downloads, and other factors. This finding has led us to making a study of the processes, publication model, and mission for *JASA-EL* a high priority.

Turning back to our IF campaign, we have a number of other strategies that we are also pursuing in addition to the two (increasing speed and in-depth analysis) discussed above. Citation counts are heavily affected by the most highly cited (high-impact) papers. So pursuing such papers and their highly respected authors is a good strategy for improving the IF. We have begun to solicit, with AIPP supporting these efforts, much more “special content” material (e.g., Special Issues, Reviews, Tutorials, Invited Articles, Forum Articles) than we have in the past. This will be a benefit for authors and readers in that these articles are free access (no pay wall), will (soon) reside on a special “landing page” on the *JASA* website and be highly promoted. From our viewpoint, soliciting content is a positive move because our readers value such material; it can bring in articles for hot or under-represented topics and will help the journal’s IF.

However, we are presently very reluctant to pursue the opposite strategy to this and penalize low-impact areas (ones with many “zero cites”) because zero cites could come from a variety of factors (including underexposure) and doesn’t necessarily mean that an article is of low quality. Also, most importantly, the different disciplines that comprise the ASA and *JASA* have different IF expectations (van Nierop, 2009), and the historical mission of *JASA* is to serve all the technical areas that comprise the ASA. There is also the point to consider that the ASA and *JASA* welcome both academics and practitioners, and although one community may favor citations and peer-reviewed papers, the other may prefer downloads and conference papers as their *modus operandi*.

Another aspect we will do to improve the IF is to work on tightening journal standards, which includes decreasing our acceptance rate somewhat, to 50% or below, for both *JASA* and *JASA-EL*. This really is not a negative because preventing an author from presenting lower quality material is in both his/her interest and the journal’s.

As a last note on IF, we firmly state that we shun any gaming of the system (other than adding quality material and rejecting lower quality material at the review stage) to improve the IF. Tactics like requiring authors to cite *JASA*, timing the release of certain articles early in the year to improve the IF, or declining articles that are appropriate to *JASA* but are less likely to be cited are not employed by ASA publications and will not be. We insist that whatever recognition that comes to ASA publications comes by honestly.

Other Metrics

Having treated reputation, speed, and IF, probably the most widely discussed journal metrics, let us turn to some other very important but comparatively neglected quantitative metrics of journal performance. The following metrics should be considered for *JASA*: eigenfactor score, cited half-life, immediacy index, acceptance ratio, and usage. There are, of course, many more quantitative metrics one can consider, but this group gives a good representative sample.

Eigenfactor score is often referred to as a rating of the total importance of a scientific journal, and at 0.032, *JASA* ranks first among acoustics journals indexed in the Web of Science, according to AIPP's analysis presented at a recent publication review meeting. Journals are ranked by incoming number and the quality of citations ("incoming number" excludes internal citations in *JASA* articles), with citations in highly ranked journals being weighted more heavily than journals with lower ranks. Interestingly, over 75 percent of *JASA*'s citations come from other journals. As a measure of net journal worth, the eigenfactor score is thought by some to be a more robust measure than IF.

Cited half-life (or shelf life) is "the median age of the citations received by a journal during" a given year (see acousticstoday.org/citedhalflives). *JASA* has enjoyed a good cited half-life of greater than 10 years (the maximum period considered) from 2010 to 2016! This statistic probably varies across TC areas, an issue we are currently looking into, but overall it is a good one for *JASA*.

Immediacy index, which is the average number of times an article in a given journal is cited in the year it is published, was 0.255 for *JASA* in 2016. This is not a high number but is not unexpected for a journal with a long cited half-life. The immediacy is a more important statistic for fast-moving rather than "slow-burning" topical areas.

Next in discussing quantitative metrics, we come to acceptance rate. This fluctuates between 50 and 60% for *JASA* and *JASA-EL*. As mentioned, we are aiming for $\leq 50\%$ as our goal,

in line with AIPP's journals, and so will be making our acceptance hurdle just a little higher.

Finally, we look at downloads, an important quantitative metric of how much usage a journal is getting. (This number is especially important to libraries in making their decisions to maintain subscriptions in times of declining budgets.) Encouragingly, the number for *JASA* in combination with *JASA-EL* has gone up from about 800,000 per year in 2013 to about 1,350,000 in 2017, a 69% increase in 5 years. This statistic means that readership of *JASA* is increasing. We should note that this does not necessarily scale with citations because many of our valued readers and users are not academics but practitioners of acoustics for whom journal citations are not the "coin of the realm." ASA publications reach a wide and varied audience.

Qualitative Quality Factors

Having explored a sampling of quantitative metrics, let us look at some (equally important) qualitative ones. Our list includes (1) quality of reviews, (2) customer service and professional courtesy, (3) ease of submission/revision (author experience), (4) full features being available, and (5) language services for international authors and authors requiring assistance.

The first item on our "qualitative" list, quality of review, is of paramount importance. Our standard level is two substantial reviews per article and supplemental reviews if needed. Our staff of AEs is large so that we can deliver a quality review for each article in the numerous disciplines that *JASA* and *JASA-EL* cover. To aid our AEs, we undertook a massive "data cleaning" of our reviewer databases in *JASA* and *JASA-EL* Editorial Manager sites in 2017, which removed close to 50,000 inactive/duplicate names from our list of potential reviewers, and we have plans to maintain the databases going forward. This makes AE searches for reviewers within the databases much easier. Additionally, the "PDF for Reviewers" that we ask authors to create with line numbers and embedded figures and tables is a recent feature that has been well received by reviewers. While we have heard occasional negative feedback from authors regarding this extra requirement, reviewers are using it routinely and like it. We remain open to reconsider this file in the future, but for now, the reviewer PDF is beneficial by keeping many good reviewers from declining.

The next item, customer service and professional courtesy, is something that can be easily overlooked in the slightly adversarial world of peer review. Our aim is to keep the peer-review process professional and courteous; it's hard enough

for an author to have his/her work criticized, but having that criticism be impolite just results in bad feelings and unconstructive dialogue. Also, we strive for rapid communications with our authors, reviewers, and other concerned parties. Having your communication ignored is galling to anyone, and if you want to show that you value your customers and stakeholders, as our publications do, getting back to them quickly is one way to do it.

Ease of submission and revision (i.e., the “author experience” as publishers call it), is another area where we are working to make things cleaner and easier. It is one area where we have had more complaints than for other areas, and we are sensitive to these concerns. To begin with, we have upgraded our LaTeX templates for the numerous authors who use this package. Since the launch of the new templates in August 2017, we have had relatively few complaints and questions.

The second item in the submission process is the list of author questions on the Editorial Manager submission system. These were constructed rather quickly when we made the transition from the Peer X-Press system to Editorial Manager, and, admittedly, these questions have some redundancies and inconsistencies. These are presently being redone by the publications staff, and we hope to have the improved list working very soon.

The “author checklist” is another area where we have had some negative feedback, and, again, we take this input seriously. For new submissions, we try to keep this list to the minimum of items needed for a decent, reviewable manuscript and to only return manuscripts for major omissions. For revised submissions, we have more requirements that are needed because the manuscript is likely to be eventually accepted. We carefully review both the new submission checklist and the revision checklist at least twice a year.

Finally, there was a delay in manuscript processing that we used to incur when our publications staff were at ASA meetings or otherwise unavailable. That delay has now gone away because we have developed detailed procedures with documentation (which we are continuing to expand) and have backup coverage in place for our publications staff. This is the type of “process progress” we like to have happen.

Our fourth list item, full features, is one that we are close to having fulfilled at this time. Multimedia capabilities, supplementary material, open access, publish ahead of print, and (soon) immediate publishing of Special Issue papers are all realities for both *JASA* and *JASA-EL*. We will continue to keep abreast of the continuing changes and emerging tech-

nologies and work with AIPP and ASA to implement them if they are of use.

Our final “qualitative item” on the list is working with international authors, both in attracting them and in dealing with English language difficulties. The ASA designation “of America” denotes our origin and headquarters location but belies the fact that the ASA and its publications are now very international as is usual for modern technical societies. We wish to attract more and more international authors and have been working on strategies to do so.

But one problem that we (and all single-language journals) have is that some manuscripts from nonnative English-speaking authors may be poorly written. As a consequence, technical journals can miss out on excellent material due to a secondary consideration (language skills). If a manuscript’s language is such that an editor, reviewer, or reader can’t understand significant parts of it, its technical content is totally negated. Fortunately, AIPP has author services (authorservices.aip.org), including English language editing, for reasonable fees that authors can use, and in the near future, we will be advertising it more prominently on our *JASA* and *JASA-EL* websites. We are also looking at other possible support programs, although these are still in the formative stages. The bottom line message here is that we value our international authors and will be making greater efforts to attract and retain them.

Broader Journal Quality Initiatives

Up to now, we have discussed rather specific, fine-tuned responses to particular concerns and parts of the publication process. But there is a lot of activity and effort expended on a broader scale, and here we describe what some of these efforts are. They fall into diverse categories, but all share the common aspect of helping to improve our journals’ quality and our authors’ experience in publishing.

One of the most important groups we consider when discussing publications strategy is early-career authors and readers. (For this discussion here, we define early career as graduate students, postdocs, assistant professors, and non-academic professionals in their first decade of employment.) Two very positive developments aimed at our early-career authors are the ASA “Publications Workshop” and our program of an early-career publication award that is under development.

The Publications Workshop, inaugurated at the ASA New Orleans meeting in Fall 2017, was designed to give the par-

ticipants a feel for what an author, reviewer, and AE might do in handling a deeply (and purposely) flawed sample manuscript and its attendant correspondence. The New Orleans workshop turned out to be both educational and quite a bit of fun for the participants. The scientific, ethical, and communications problems posed by the sample manuscript were based on real life but also a bit exaggerated and even comic so that this wasn't just a dry exercise. Based on the positive response, we are planning for these workshops (and similar ones for the Society) to be repeated in the future at reasonable intervals.

As to giving out an yearly early-career award, most journals do so these days, and it is time that our journals do so as well. Additionally, awards are being discussed for all career stages, not just for our early-career professionals.

Staying a little while longer with our younger demographic, we should also mention the ASA and ASA publications social media efforts. While there is a small to medium number of older (e.g., baby boomer) acousticians who use social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn), the younger generations have grown up with social media being an integral part of their lives and communication network, and social media impact is considered in the altmetrics for an article. So, to reach this younger demographic, technical societies and their publications need to develop a strong social media presence, and the ASA and its publications are doing just that. ASA publications now have a presence on Facebook (@ASAPOMA; @JournaloftheAcousticalSocietyofAmerica) and Twitter (@ASA_POMA; @ASA_JASA). ASA publications recently partnered with Kudos (acousticstoday.org/kudos), which is a Web-based service that helps authors further promote their publications. A broad, coordinated plan between the ASA and its publications is in development and should be of real value to our social media users.

In addition to social media, we are actively working with AIPP to better utilize the journal sites and also do more email campaigns to promote and disseminate our publications. The new journal site for *JASA* features four articles per quarter in a "Technical Area Picks" section (acousticstoday.org/TAP), which are chosen by the TC chairs, with this material being made free access while featured. A Special Content landing site (nearing completion) will feature all Special Issues, Review, Tutorial, Guest Invited, and Forum papers, again with additional promotion and free access. In addition to these Web initiatives, email promotion campaigns are also being routinely deployed for ASA publications, giving our authors' publications further visibility. And for the old-fashioned members who prefer print, physical fliers

and brochures describing the ASA publications and featured papers are given out at many of the meetings that acousticians routinely attend. Although advertising and promotion of published papers may not seem initially to be a "quality" factor, making sure your work gets read and used really is a piece of a publication's overall quality and is being taken seriously.

What Do You Really Think of Us?

Along the lines of outreach to our publication stakeholders, there is one more category to mention: surveys, suggestions, and complaints. In February and March 2018, we had KWF Consulting design and conduct an author and reader survey for *JASA* and *JASA-EL*, where 16,000+ email requests were sent out (Hager and Rivera, 2018.). We received nearly 2,000 replies, and we are currently reviewing the analysis and report. The overall feedback is positive, but we will examine the survey results closely to create action items in areas we can further improve. The results from this will be discussed extensively at the Minneapolis ASA meeting. Also, AIPP supplies ASA publications each month with the results of a brief postpublication "author survey" that includes both comments and statistics. And finally, we always welcome author, reviewer, reader, and editor feedback on any of the components of our publications and their processes. We welcome both positive and negative comments as we learn from both. And we do try to reply to all we receive, although we are occasionally a bit slower than we'd like to be. Address such correspondence to either our managing editor or the editor in chief, if you would.

Some "Very Boring Basics" That Keep the Wheels Turning

Besides external inputs from our readers, authors, reviewers, etc., *JASA* and *JASA-EL* also benefit from a lot of internal communication and evaluation. On the peer-review side, the Editorial Manager's Enterprise Analytics Reporting (EAR) status reports are assembled by our managing editor to be reported at each ASA meeting as well as for reporting for quarterly key metrics reports and other process tracking or analysis. On the publications side, AIPP provides quarterly reports and a yearly synopsis of our published paper activity, which again provide updates to our ASA meetings with the Executive Council, Technical Council, and Editorial Board. We are trying hard to keep up-to-date statistics to inform us of our status, and these are two internal ways we do so.

Additional inputs from within the publications world also help us monitor and maintain our quality factors. We have

our Editorial Board Luncheon and Business Meeting for *JASA*, *JASA-EL*, and *POMA* at each ASA meeting. Once a month, AIPP and the ASA publications office have a conference call to work on ongoing projects and concerns. Also monthly, the ASA Strategic Plan Task Force 3 subgroup (focused on publications strategy) has a conference call. On a (roughly) biyearly basis, our peer-review system provider, Aries Systems, gives webinars to our associate editors to teach new editors and update all editors on the Editorial Manager peer-review system. And once a year, Aries Systems has an Editorial Manager User Group (EMUG) meeting in Boston that is usually attended by a few members of the publications staff, where all the latest issues of peer review and workflow are discussed. Twice a year, AIPP hosts its “Panel of Editors” meeting, where the broad aspects of the publications world are discussed as well as the finer details of publishing with AIPP.

Perhaps a bit more exciting, on March 15, 2018, a day-long “ASA Publications Summit” was held, which was a large-scale review of all of the ASA publications. Large reviews like this are infrequent, but when they happen, they are enormously helpful. Both ASA and AIPP personnel took part (see **Figure 1**) and developed a large list of action items and ideas to help stimulate the growth and quality of all of the ASA publications.

This may seem like a large number of meetings overall, but these mostly mundane, workaday affairs are absolutely necessary if one wants to stay abreast in the publications world or even get a little ahead of the game!

Concluding Remarks and Thoughts Toward the Future

If you have had the tenacity to read this far, you will perhaps agree that evaluating and continually improving journal quality is a very multifaceted topic. Publishing journals like *JASA* and *JASA-EL* takes constant attention to detail, good team work, extensive communications, and overall devotion. ASA publications is fortunate to have a very good staff, publisher, peer-review system, editorial board (AE) staff, and vendors as well as a Society that cares deeply about its publications. All these components work to provide our authors and readers a high-quality venue in which to publish their work and read that of their colleagues.

Finally, as we promised to discuss, where do we envision being in 1, 5, and 10 years from now, assuming that the Fates are kind?

The one-year prediction is the easiest, of course. Given the inputs from the Publication Summit, the KWF Consulting survey (Hager and Rivera, 2018), AIPP’s inputs, our internal statistics studies, and so on, our list of important things to do is long. It will easily take us a few years to accomplish the main items on this list. But the near-future roadmap is there and has been thoughtfully worked out, and our immediate future lies in following it.

As to the five-year mark, it is more appropriate to talk about expectations than about concrete plans. In 2023, we would hope to see both *JASA* and *JASA-EL* enjoy a higher IF and a higher rate of submissions and contain more special content features and articles. Also by this time, the paper and CD versions of *JASA* might be phased out, although that is not certain. And, of course, our speed and quality initiatives will continue to be pursued and improved.

In 2028, the year before the 100th birthday of the ASA, we fully expect a huge flurry of activity in looking at what the ASA and its publications have accomplished. And although this certainly will have a strong retrospective component, we hope there will be a strong forward-looking one as well. The ASA and its publications have historically had, and will have in the future, a large role to play in the universe of sound.

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