EDITORIAL

Letter from the Editor

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The purpose of this letter is primarily to provide a status report on the operations of JIBS.

The transition to the new editorial team of JIBS officially began on March 1st, 2002. It was not as smooth a transition as I would have liked. The legacy of this process has been degradation in the ability of JIBS to process manuscripts on a timely basis. However, I am pleased to report that the manuscript processing difficulties that JIBS has encountered through most of 2003 have been overcome.

The table below provides a summary of operations in 2003.

Number of submissions	2003		
	414 ¹		
Desk rejects	75	Total	259 rejected
Rejected	184		
In revise and resubmit	99		
Waiting for DE decision	24		
In review	27		
Published	5 ²		

¹A 52% increase over 2002.

²Other papers published in 2003 were accepted by Tom Brewer immediate past Editor-in-Chief.

It is gratifying that in 2003 JIBS has experienced a strong increase in submissions. So far in 2004, the pace of submissions is slightly ahead of 2003. However, of much greater importance is the progress that has been made in timely processing of manuscripts. Since my report to the membership at the AIB 2003 Annual meeting in Monterey California, the operationality of the on-line JIBS manuscript processing system has been steadily improved and fine tuned. Literally hundreds of fixes have been implemented that enhance the professional appearance (touch and feel) of the system, significantly improve reliability and robustness, and simplify interactions with authors, reviewers and editors. A good measure of system robustness and operationality is the frequency of inquiries or requests for assistance received by the Managing Editor. For the past few months such inquiries have dwindled to the point of rare occurrences. Timeliness and quality of the reviewing process has also been dramatically improved. The most recent statistics indicate that the number of manuscripts waiting for first review for more than 3 months total 21 out of 207 active files in process. This number excludes 24 files currently awaiting DE editorial decisions.

Several concrete steps have been taken to speed up the review process. In addition to streamlining the on-line manuscript processing system, which has reduced the time lag on average by 2 weeks, the JIBS Editorial Review Board has been expanded to make certain that each manuscript will be reviewed by two ERB members. JIBS ERB members are expected to be committed to complete a review within 30 days of receiving invitation to review. JIBS is continuing the policy of soliciting reviewer nominations from authors and when feasible the third reviewer is chosen from these nominations. When author nominations are infeasible or unavailable an *ad hoc* reviewer is invited to serve as the third reviewer. The process of inviting the third reviewer, however, does sometimes extend the time

it takes to complete the assignment of reviewers. However, Departmental Editors have been empowered to make their editorial decision on the basis of two reviews and their own judgment whenever possible. Finally, the service of a handful of ERB members has been discontinued after a review of timeliness and quality of reviews revealed a consistent pattern of being late with their reviews. The overall effect of all the changes described above is a significant improvement in the time required for processing first reviews. However, I wish to go on record as saying that the goal of JIBS is to provide first reviews within 3 months or less from the date that a paper has been logged on to the on-line system. While much progress has been made this past year much remains to be done.