



## Editorial

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Since taking over as editors of *JORS*, we have seen a substantial rise in the number of papers being submitted each year. The statistics for submitted papers are as follows:

2000	300
2001	344
2002	297
2003	583
2004	676
2005	676
2006	328 (first 5 months of year)

In the last few years of the journal, the volume typically contained 120–140 papers annually, so the acceptance rate of papers was about 40–50%. During 2003, things started to change and the number of submissions has taken a step change followed by further increases. Issues have remained much the same size, so two things have happened—there has been a considerable decrease in our acceptance rate and we have seen the growth of a backlog of papers awaiting publication in an issue. Up to and including 2004, we had only a very small backlog of papers awaiting publication. The growth of the backlog has overlapped with the introduction of AOP (Advance Online Publication), a system by which authors and readers have been able to access the typeset version of their paper. This has offered some compensation for the growth in the backlog.

Why are we getting more papers submitted to the journal? Colleagues have suggested that the rise in submissions is caused by the Research Assessment Exercise in the UK, but unless they are simultaneously having such an exercise

in the USA, Taiwan, Korea, India, and so on, this does not explain the dramatic rise in papers coming from many different countries. The reasons for the rise we hope would be more connected with the reputation of the journal, including aspects of its record in moving accepted papers fairly quickly to publication.

As editors, we have made two types of attempt to stem the growth of a backlog. First, we have negotiated with the publishers a modest rise in issue size. Second, we are being much more vigilant in rejecting some papers without recourse to sending them to referees. We reject papers immediately that do not fit with the mission of *JORS*, if, for example, a paper has no real-world motivation, nor does it have practical application or empirical testing, and is merely a mathematical exercise with a hypothetical model, and makes only a limited contribution to the theory of OR. However, when we feel a paper does fit with the mission of the journal and subsequently two expert referees provide encouraging reports about the paper, subject to revision, and the authors do what the referees request, then we take the advice of the referees and accept the paper. Thus, we are in a sense at the crossroads—we could become much tougher and reject an increasingly high proportion of papers, we could look to increase the sizes of issues, or we could accept that the backlog will continue to grow.

As a way forward, we hope to continue to reduce the backlog of papers awaiting publication in hard copy, which has now peaked, by being more vigilant in considering only highest quality papers and encouraging referees to be equally vigilant. If submissions continue to rise, we will also press for modest rises in the page lengths of each volume.

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