

Editorial

If there is one rags-to-riches story that deserves to be told again, it is the story of *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*. During its first 5 years of existence under the guiding hand of Roddy Roediger, *PB&R* completely divorced itself from its underachieving predecessor (the *Bulletin of the Psychonomic Society*, in case you repressed it) to become one of the premier journals in experimental psychology. This was accomplished by changing the journal's name by approximately one JND, switching to a refereed format, and arranging for the journal to reach virtually every member of the Psychonomic Society. Suddenly, the society's flagship journal would no longer be regarded as the final resting place for papers that were not quite good enough to survive peer review. Instead, work published in *PB&R* would now be regarded as scholarship of the highest caliber that would be seen, if not read, by an entire society of active experimental psychologists.

The journal's format is unique in that it publishes not only theory and review articles, but also brief reports of experimental findings. While this may not be news to most, some of the papers I have received during the first year of my term suggest that this information is still top secret in some quarters. If you are wondering where to send an experimental article of standard length (e.g., 3 or 4 experiments, 5 figures and tables, 30 or more manuscript pages of text), consider one of the other fine journals published by the Psychonomic Society. But if you are ready to submit either a brief report of an interesting finding or an incisive theoretical review article, *PB&R* may be the place for you. It probably reaches more of those to whom you wish to communicate than any of its worthy competitors.

Because the journal is now an attractive place to publish one's best work, my associate editors and I have both the opportunity and the obligation to be fairly selective. Where should the emphasis be placed as we try to decide which papers deserve the society's attention and which do not? In addition to evaluating the scientific importance and methodological soundness of papers submitted for publication (as any good journal would do) we also plan to emphasize two additional qualities: originality and accessibility. With regard to the former, a brief report appearing in *PB&R* should not simply be a compact description of a minor, incremental empirical achievement but should instead be characterized by a measure of ingenuity and creativity. In the same vein, a theory or review article should provoke the imagination in a way that a perfunctory inventory of previously published findings certainly would not. Originality is obviously in the eye of the beholder, so papers appearing in *PB&R* may occasionally seem somewhat offbeat.

With regard to accessibility, it seems essential that *PB&R* not try to be five journals in one. That is, the journal should not be in the business of publishing papers for a specialized audience that, save for length, would appear in *Perception & Psychophysics*, *Animal Learning & Behavior*, *Psychobiology*, *Memory & Cognition*, or *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments, & Computers*. Instead, papers bound for *PB&R* should be prepared with the broad Psychonomic audience in mind. I suspect that psycholinguists, for example, might find work on animal behavior more interesting than they now do if animal learning researchers would not take it for granted that everyone knows what a concurrent VI VI schedule of reinforcement is and why it is an interesting procedure to use. Similarly, animal learning theorists might enjoy reading about new developments in the field of psycholinguistics if language researchers would bear in mind that not everyone knows what a "mora" language is. There are obviously limits to what one can accomplish along these lines, but my associate editors and I will be encouraging authors to prepare their papers with the general readership in mind. In this era of superspecialization, I'd like *PB&R* to be the one place where members of the Psychonomic Society can keep abreast of the interesting work performed by their colleagues who happen to specialize in other areas.

Working with me in this endeavor is the following distinguished group of associate editors:

Kenneth I. Forster, University of Arizona: Psycholinguistics

Robert L. Goldstone, Indiana University: Higher Order Cognition

Elliot Hirshman, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill: Memory & Cognition

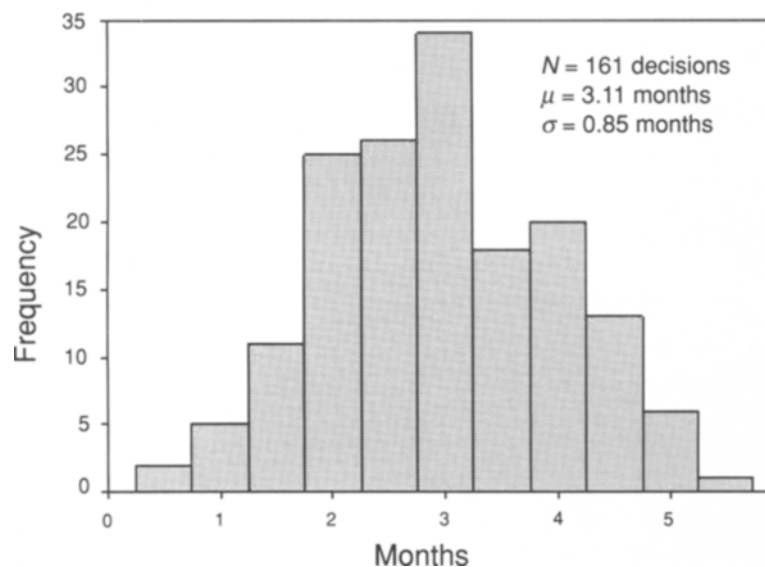
James E. Hoffman, University of Delaware: Attention & Perception
 Harold Pashler, University of California, San Diego: Attention & Perception
 Thomas R. Zentall, University of Kentucky: Animal Learning & Cognition

The areas of expertise represented by these individuals define the five categories into which most of the papers submitted to *PB&R* fall. One should not assume, however, that other topics are not welcome. They are. Papers from any area of experimental psychology would fit well into *PB&R*; these include cognitive neuroscience, developmental psychology, social psychology, and experimental psychopathology, to name a few. In addition to publishing timely papers on the latest developments in areas such as these, I also hope to see the journal publish some papers concerned with issues that may no longer be the focus of current attention. I have long admired the conceptual elegance and mathematical precision that characterized some of the best work performed by previous generations of experimental psychologists, and I worry that some of the lessons they learned could be forgotten as the field moves ahead at breakneck speed into new and exciting areas. Thus, ideally, *PB&R* will offer a blend of papers, most of which address the newest and most exciting questions of the day and some of which revisit interesting questions from the past that deserve another look.

For anyone who might be considering submitting a paper to *PB&R*, some information about our first year on the job (which, unbeknownst to many, we just completed) may be of some interest. In particular, one might wish to know how likely my editorial team was to accept a paper submitted for publication last year and how quickly we arrived at our editorial decisions. Partly because of practical considerations, *PB&R* has rapidly become quite selective. We received 222 new submissions in 1998 (214 in 1997), and the journal is published only quarterly. Unless we publish book-length issues, we obviously do not have room for most of these papers. In 1998, we made 166 editorial decisions on newly submitted papers. Of these, about 90% were rejected (about a third of those with an invitation to resubmit) and 10% accepted (most of those pending some revision). Resubmitted papers are obviously more likely to be accepted, and, on the basis of our performance thus far, I estimate that about 30% of these 166 papers will eventually be accepted for publication following various amounts of revision.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of editorial lag times for papers that were new to my editorial team (though not necessarily new to *PB&R*) and that were sent out for peer review (usually to three reviewers). The distribution represents the lag times from the date when the manuscript was received in my office to the date when the author was notified of an editorial decision for 161 decisions. Not included in this distribution are quick decisions on 20 papers that were not sent out

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for review. These 20 papers were all rejected, mostly because authors failed to adhere to brief report guidelines. For the 161 editorial decisions represented in Figure 1, the mean turnaround time was about 3 months, and there were no editorial “disasters” (with the possible exception of one decision that required 5.4 months because, for that paper, everything that could go wrong did go wrong). I know that potential authors would prefer an even faster turnaround time, and so would I. Still, I am boldly presenting Figure 1 because (1) making this information public will help to keep me and my associate editors on our toes, and (2) even though it could be better, I suspect that our performance in this regard compares quite favorably with the competition.

As long as we continue to perform our duties in an efficient and (hopefully) intelligent manner, the journal seems sure to prosper. Simply by virtue of its charter (namely, that the journal shall be rigorously refereed and shall reach virtually every member of the Psychonomic Society), *PB&R* has become a leading contender for some of the best papers the field has to offer. The competition, which includes the likes of *Psychological Science* and *Psychological Review*, is obviously fierce, but as long as we continue to offer potential authors the kind of careful and prompt review that we have up to this point, *PB&R* may become (and, for many, already has become) the journal of which they think first when they consider where to submit the work that they would most like their colleagues to see.

John T. Wixted
Editor