Editors' Cut: Managing Scholarly Journals in Mathematics and IT

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The first version of this essay was jointly delivered by the authors as a colloquium lecture at the University of Ballarat on 24 November, 2004. A second, expanded and illustrated version was published in German in the Mitteilungen der Deutschen Mathematikervereinigung early in 2005. Because of the very positive feedback, the authors decided it would be useful to publish a version in English in a computing journal. The purpose of the essay is to provide advice and information to authors of articles about publishing in scholarly journals from an editor's perspective. Of particular importance are remarks about etiquette.

ACM Classification: K.7.4 (Professional Ethics)

PREFACE

Most members of the academic community aspire to achieving international recognition as a researcher or scholar. One important and probably necessary condition to attain this goal is the publishing of research papers in refereed international journals or books in recognized scholarly series.

We present here our outlook on publishing journals in Mathematics and Information Technology based on our experience as Managing Editors of five journals and membership of editorial boards of other journals and series. In doing so we hope to encourage those who do not regularly publish in journals to think seriously of doing so and to give the more experienced reader some information that may be new even to old hands.

There are several parts of the constituents contributing to the operation of a journal.

The AUTHOR contributes his product by submitting it to the EDITOR for publication in the journal, the EDITOR secures the expert advice of one or several REFEREEs and arrives at a decision to accept the contribution for publication or to reject it. If the decision is positive, the
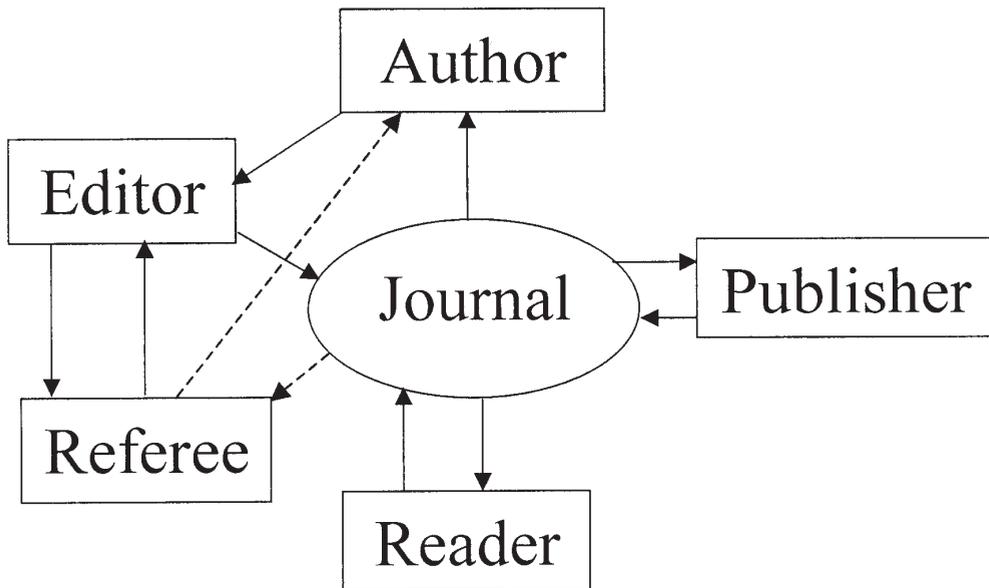
submitted material enters the process of publication in the journal. How this process works is one of the topics of this essay.

The PUBLISHER (of which there are several species as we shall see) carries the financial and commercial burden of running the journal. His input is to provide at least some, often most, of the publishing infrastructure, and in return hopes to make a profit, directly or indirectly from the publicity that a viable journal adds to the sale of other products he wishes to sell.

Finally there is the READER: He is the consumer of the product "journal" and its contents. His feedback is through providing the journal with customers, either individually or through organisations such as libraries, schools, or universities. The scholarly reputation and *prestige* of the journal is based on the acceptance of the journal by the READER. We shall have something to say about the role of the scholarly *prestige* of the journal and what attempts are being made to go as far as to even *measure* it and to *compare* it between competing journals.

In this theatre we have played all roles (maybe with the exception of the role of the publisher), and we hope to give the reader an authentic impression what it is like from the perspective of each of these players.

CONTENTS

We shall proceed as follows:
1. We introduce the journals we have managed in order to give the reader an impression where we stand in this scheme of things and what our background is.
2. Etiquette: How an author should and should not behave in his dealings with an EDITOR. What an EDITOR expects from a REFEREE, and how a REFEREE should act. What are the services rendered by the PUBLISHER?
3. Prestige: How a journal establishes its stature, ISI-rankings.
4. Types of Journals: What PUBLISHERs are in the business of producing scholarly journals? What is the history behind scholarly journals in our areas?

5. Production: From Johannes Gutenberg to Donald Knuth: From conventional typesetting, through author manufactured and photo-reproduced typewriter output all the way to author generated electronic typesetting files. Conventional publication on paper versus electronic publication on the internet. On-line-first publication.
6. The Editorial Structure of a journal: Managing EDITORs, EDITORs, Refereeing. How does an EDITOR make the decision between Acceptance and Rejection, and which EDITOR makes this decision? Criteria and rate of acceptance: What are your chances of your paper being accepted? What is Backlog? What is Waiting Time?

1. Speaking for ourselves

The authors have been or are currently managing editors of the following:

Karl H. Hofmann: (i) Semigroup Forum, Co-Founding Editor (1970) and Managing Editor through 1998, since 1998: Honorary Editor; (ii) Forum Mathematicum, Co-Founding Editor (1989) and Executive Editor to 1999; (iii) Journal of Lie Theory (named after Sophus Lie, 1842–1899), Founding Editor (1990), Managing Editor to1999 and Deputy Managing Editor since.

Sidney A. Morris: (i) Bulletin of the Australian Mathematical Society, 2nd Editor after the Founding Editor B.H. Neumann, 1979–1984, Associate Editor 1985–Present; (ii) Journal of Research and Practice of Information Technology, Editor-in-Chief since 2003. (iii) Founding Editor-in-Chief, Australian Mathematical Society Lecture Series, a book series published by Cambridge University Press, 1984–1989.

2. Questions of Etiquette

Etiquette between Author and Editor

The EDITOR should be courteous in all dealings with AUTHORs and should instruct assistants in this spirit.

Some commercial journals of big publishers have relegated this traffic to functionaries at the publisher's office. Indeed in some instances the AUTHOR (and indeed the REFEREE as well) deals with a website in place of a live person. We view this as a sad development. It may be considered acceptable if handled correctly.

The AUTHOR on his part, when receiving the EDITOR's decision, and if this decision is negative, should never, never start to argue with the EDITOR. That would be pointless: the EDITOR has the final say; there is no appeal court anywhere in sight. The EDITOR in his decisions rules like an absolute monarch.

One trusts, however, that he rules wisely, but even if an author thinks he has been wronged by the REFEREE or the EDITOR: it is counterproductive on the AUTHOR's part to start an argument. That just causes irritation, and EDITORs seem to have memories like elephants. Indeed the AUTHOR can never be sure whether the services of this same EDITOR may be needed again on a future occasion.

Etiquette between EDITOR and REFEREE

The relation between EDITOR and REFEREE, the journal's external expert adviser and evaluator, is one of mutual respect. The REFEREE is an expert giving his services out of professional ethos and without any tangible remuneration in most scholarly communities – certainly in mathematics and IT. The EDITOR depends on the cooperation of a host of competent and helpful REFEREEs. So he is very circumspect in dealing with a tardy REFEREE. It is bad editorial practice to allow REFEREEs to be alienated by discourteous intercourse.

Some very large scale publishers have taken the communication with the REFEREEs from the EDITORs and have entrusted it to functionaries in the offices of the PUBLISHER and have, in some instances, based it on intercourse with a website. This, in our opinion, contravenes the excellent classical tradition that sees scholarly publication as an academic institution; this tradition was firmly entrenched in the 19th and early 20th century. As REFEREEs we prefer to communicate with the EDITORs of the journal; the relation EDITOR-REFEREE is a communication between academic peers.

Irritated REFEREEs
The REFEREE is often confronted with contributions that he finds beneath his dignity for one reason or another: The material submitted is ridiculously bad or wrong, the REFEREE's work is not or inadequately referenced, the results are correct, but known, and so on. Of course, if the material to be judged is in the REFEREE's proper domain, then it is natural for the REFEREE to glance first at the list of references and to verify whether his own contributions to the area are properly referenced. As a rule, he will find that this is the case, as the EDITOR often selects the REFEREE himself by first looking at the AUTHOR's bibliography. So, frequently, when circumstances are adverse, the anonymous REFEREE is tempted to pepper his report with snide comments. This is not good practice, and the EDITOR has the delicate task of taking out the offensive tenor in one way or another: He does not wish to alienate his REFEREE and he is bound by the etiquette towards the AUTHOR to adhere to correct and courteous procedure at all stages.

Having indicated characteristics that might dispose a potential referee favorably or unfavorably towards a text submitted for publication we direct an AUTHOR's attention to the lessons that are hidden in these remarks: when submitting a paper, give it this last bit of final attention having POSSIBLE referees in mind!

The EDITOR as a Mediator
REFEREEs may have a bias for whatever their reason. The EDITOR should, if at all possible, recognize bias and put it in proper perspective in his decision. The most valuable REFEREE's reports are those that make constructive remarks and suggestions, and point out errors explicitly. In rare occasions it may happen, with the AUTHOR's prior consent, if not request, that the EDITOR mediates in the creation of a joint publication in which a REFEREE who has made substantial contributions to the subject matter at hand, becomes a coauthor.

The EDITOR as a Mentor
As a rule, an AUTHOR can expect to be treated correctly and sometimes with exquisite courtesy even if a decision is adverse. Really good EDITORs in such cases will bend over backwards to give advice to the AUTHOR, in particular, if they know, or sense, that they are dealing with an early career author. It has been our experience that authors do, in such cases, react gratefully, gracefully, and in good spirit.

Dealing with an Acceptance
When an AUTHOR's contribution is accepted, the acceptance notice normally communicates REFEREE's suggestions and EDITOR's requests with a notification that a revision in the indicated direction is desired. If the AUTHOR receives these suggestions, he should do his best to comply with the requests, because these are made in a constructive spirit. This situation does not call for arguments except in the rarest of circumstances, and the AUTHOR is well advised not to delay the publication of his contribution by lengthy correspondence.

Dealing with a Rejection

An AUTHOR will always be disappointed if a submission gets rejected by the EDITOR of a journal, no matter how sweetly this bitter pill is sugarred. Even if rationally convinced of the fairness of the decision, the AUTHOR consciously or subconsciously receives a rejection as a slap on the fingers; no matter what: it remains a rejection.

The REFEREE's identity is kept confidential from the author. The AUTHOR is often tempted to speculate about the REFEREE's identity by interpreting what are seen as personal tracks in the REFEREE's report. As senior participants in the game, we strongly advise against such speculation, because, as a rule, it goes terribly wrong, in which case the author in his mind blames the wrong person for having authored a negative report.

Calmly and rationally regarded, the rejection of a submitted paper is not a disaster. The author, either following the EDITOR's advice or taking his own initiative, will move on to the next journal. In such a situation, an AUTHOR will often make judgments on the prestige of a journal he chooses. The higher the prestige, the less likely is acceptance. The lower the prestige, the less valuable is an acceptance in the eyes of third parties making judgment on evaluations, such as employers. Such considerations look secondary, but they do play a role. It is for this reason that we shall look more closely at the concept of the "prestige of a journal'" in a moment.

But first a quick look at the PUBLISHER.

The PUBLISHER. Commercial aspects. Copyright. Reprints

The PUBLISHER operates all commercial aspects of the journal, involving marketing, sales subscriptions, and legal matters. Traditionally, the PUBLISHER owns the copyright of all material he publishes, and traditionally the AUTHOR cedes the rights over his creation to the PUBLISHER in written form. However, the growing prevalence and acceptance of electronic media, the well-established access to the internet, and the prepublications deposited in it have contributed to a relaxation of the copyright practice. As a consequence, today the PUBLISHER obtains from the AUTHOR the permission to print and publish submitted material. Readers who are interested in copyright issues merely have to resort to Google or Google Scholar in order to realize what a wide and movable feast they have entered.

AUTHORs are almost never paid for papers that are published in scholarly journals. In the cold war period, state publishers in communist countries regularly paid authors, even those from the noncommunist domains. AUTHORs do receive a certain number of free reprints and have to pay (often very stiff prices) for extra copies they order. Sometimes PUBLISHERs bill AUTHORs page charges, that is, a fixed fee per published page; normally page charges are waived if outside funding is not available for them.

Conditions vary from one journal to the next. EDITORs are not generally paid for their work, although this may vary as well. In an environment that is often hostile towards large publishing firms who inflate subscription prices to prohibitive heights for institutional consumers such as libraries and departments, affluent PUBLISHERs may wish to "buy" their EDITORs and their support for the PUBLISHER. None of this, however, is our topic here.

3. Ranking journals

The impact factor

Like all institutions and commodities in the modern world of academia, science and scholarship, journals are evaluated and ranked. Originally, the ranking on a statistical basis was done for the benefit of library professionals. But in the last 20 years or so, journal ranking has become an often

rather significant factor in the evaluation of the scholarly effectiveness and achievements of individuals. The evaluators not only ask "how much do you publish" and threaten you with "publish or perish!", but they also ask "where do you publish?" and threaten you with "publish in the top 30% or topple!"

The ranking is contained in the *Journal Citation Reports*, published annually by the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) in Philadelphia. The ranking is done by the so-called *impact factor*. The impact factor i of Journal J in the year 2003, say, is a ratio calculated as follows: the total number of citations q in 2003 anywhere of any article published in J in the years 2001 and 2002 is divided by the total number a of articles published in J in 2001 and 2002; that is $i=q/a$. Another parameter is the *cited half life* measured in years. Here one counts the number Q of citations anywhere in 2003 of articles having appeared in all previous years in journal J and then counts the number of years, from the present going back, in which 50% of those citations have originated. That number of years is the cited half life. If this number is small, one thinks that the results published in J do not have a great longevity, because not many results from the past have survived to be quoted in 2003. For instance, in the 2003 rankings for mathematics journals we might find:

Rank	Journal Abbreviation	Impact Factor	2003 Articles	Cited Half-Life
1	B AMER MATH SOC	3.647	17	> 10.0
2	J AMER MATH SOC	2.457	35	7.4
3	COMMUN PUR APPL MATH	2.250	54	> 10.0
4	FOUND COMPUT MATH	1.867	13	
5	ACTA MATH-DJURSHOLM	1.793	7	> 10.0
6	ANN MATH	1.505	39	> 10.0
7	DISCRETE CONT DYN S	1.504	106	3.1
8	INVENT MATH	1.315	65	> 10.0
9	DUKE MATH J	1.222	86	> 10.0
10	J MATH PURE APPL	1.122	44	> 10.0

The order of magnitude of the impact factor varies greatly from field to field. In microbiology, ambitious scientists will not submit their results to a journal whose impact factor is below 6. In mathematics, all but one of the impact factors in 2003 are below 3, and all but 3 are below 1. The ranking is based on the impact factor, and in mathematics it is the third digit behind the decimal point that normally determines the rank. Accordingly, observed over a number of years, the rank by impact factor of one and the same journal is subject to considerable vacillations; an oscillation by an amplitude of 20 rank places in a field of, say, 174 journals (as is the case in the 2003 ranking of pure mathematics journals) is not uncommon. However, what is comparatively stable is a cohort of journals that are consistently ranked among the top ten percent of the scale, permuting places, to be sure, but still showing up in this bracket every time. These are indeed the journals that would be considered to be the most prestigious ones by most working mathematicians even if they had no idea about any impact factor or of any cited half life. However we note that the number of citations for good journals varies greatly according to the discipline and even between subdisciplines like pure and applied mathematics. Therefore, the inclusion of applied mathematics journals or journals which straddle applied and pure mathematics into a pure mathematics ranking are apt to distort the ranking.

The original purpose of the ranking parameters was not to provide academic employers with yet another tool for evaluating their academic staff, but rather to give librarians some assistance in classifying their holdings. Nevertheless, in a time when the academic environment is filled with evaluations the journal ranking will remain part of the game of "measuring" the prestige of a journal in the various fields despite the often emphatic criticism of the abuse of such statistical parameters in this and other comparable contexts.

4. Who publishes scholarly periodicals?

The publishers of scientific and scholarly periodicals can be divided into three categories:

(i) The lion's share is with commercial publishers who publish for profit. One might be led to believe that the publication of periodicals does not create substantial financial returns. Yet the price gouging that has taken place in the market speaks a different language. One of the deplorable consequences is that the funding of their journal holding has ruined the budget of many an academic library. Commercial publishers come in all sizes down from such giants as Elsevier Publishers through moderately sized operations all the way down to publishers like those run by a few people like Heldermann Verlag.

(ii) There is a tradition in some countries that universities run scholarly journals. This is normally recognized by the fact that the name of the university is detected in the name of the journal. University Presses, however, have often become commercial publishers. Examples are Princeton University Press, Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press.

(iii) The third category of scholarly journals is comprised of journals published by various professional societies, such as the Australian Mathematical Society and the Bulletin of the Australian Mathematical Society, or the Deutsche Mathematiker-Vereinigung, which publishes the time-honored Jahresbericht der DMV, and the Mitteilungen der DMV, and so on. The largest professional society in mathematics is the American Mathematical Society which publishes half a dozen journals (Notices, Bulletin, Proceedings, Transactions, Memoirs, Journal, American Journal of Mathematics). In all major countries contributing to research, journals of this kind are published. Usually the professional societies charge affordable subscription rates for their journals to members; sometimes the membership fee includes subscriptions to some of the society journals. One of the oldest computing journals in the world is the Journal of Research and Practice in Information Technology (JRPIT) which is published by the Australian Computer Society and is provided free of charge to its 15,000 members.

5. The Art of Typesetting

Production: From Johannes Gutenberg to Donald Knuth and from paper to the liquid crystal screen. Our practice of publishing scholarly creations in periodicals or books benefits from two industrial revolutions of a primary order of magnitude. The first one dates to the middle of the 15th century (about 550 years ago) and is based on the development of producing paper on a large scale and the printing of texts on paper with movable type cast in lead.

The second revolution is the development of information technology in the second half of the 20th century with the printing with lead type replaced by electronic printing of typography created by computer typesetting. Likewise we observe a replacement of paper as an archival medium by storing information electronically.

The invention of printing with movable type is generally credited to Johannes Gutenberg. If one were to attach a name to the contemporary revolution which transformed typesetting, notably in the

publication of technical and mathematical periodicals and monographs, then it would be that of Donald Knuth whose imprints on computer science have been manifold. What counts here is that he created no less than a standard for author generated mathematical typesetting, a standard that has been embraced by virtually all writing mathematicians, physicists, and theoretical computer scientists, and that is the programming language for typesetting called TeX. As is usual in this area, there are enlarged dialects and variations of this language, such as LaTeX, that are now in use, notably in the production of mathematical journals, but the fundamental principles created by Knuth prevail.

Prior to 1965, the production of a journal article, that is the actual creation of the printed product, was composed conventionally by professional typesetters; the galleys proofs were sent to the author for corrections, returned to the publisher who then had them printed in the printshop.

In the sixties the idea of publishing journals and monographs, such as lecture notes, more informally and at lower expenses to the publisher was generated primarily by Springer-Verlag (Heidelberg, Berlin, at that time also New York), and mainly by Dr Klaus Peters, a professional mathematician turned publishing expert for the traditional Springer-Verlag. (Peters and his wife Alice now run their own publishing company, A K Peters, Ltd.) He introduced the concept of the "Lecture Notes in Mathematics", then revolutionary in the sense that he elicited from potential authors the publication of material which was, by classical standards, in a yet unfinished and unpolished form but nevertheless very interesting to the peer community. This turned out so be successful and created an entire genre of publications which continues to permeate the world of publication today, now that it is supported by a much more advanced technology of reproduction. In those days the second revolutionary innovation was the idea of producing the published article or monograph via photo-reproduction from a typescript provided by the author. The first mathematics journal created in this fashion was Springer-Verlag's "Manuscripta Mathematica". The journal Semigroup Forum was the first one using this publication technology, combining it with another innovation in mathematics publication at the time, namely, to allow relatively narrow subspecialties to cultivate their own vehicle of publication.

The practice of author generated publishable products put into evidence a characteristic that was taken for granted up to that time by the readers and authors and that had been the professional secret of the typesetters and printers: the *uniformity* of the format of a printed page in a book or journal. Even the earliest products of the printers' art such as the 42-line Gutenberg Bible had *uniformity* as its inimitable mark, unrivalled even by the medieval scribes with their goose quills penning the scriptures on thin parchment.

Each journal has an identifying format, expressed in many characteristics too numerous to describe here, involving the choice of type fonts, page format of the printed surface, shape of the headlines and the first and last pages of an article.

As the principle of the author generated printable product has caught on in the last 25 years as a labour and cost saving device, it was necessary to give the authors the means to create a professionally looking printed page and to secure uniformity in a medium like a periodical in which many authors present their individual creations. Here is where Donald Knuth's creation of the programming language TeX for typesetting comes in. The genius of Knuth's typesetting program is that it fully captures the aesthetics of historic typesetting à la Johannes Gutenberg of Mainz or Aldo Manutius of Venice and combines the resulting requirements on uniformity with an individual freedom of designing a typeset product for those choosing to use it. For the designing of his type fonts, Knuth had the collaboration of the eminent contemporary typographer Hermann Zapf of Darmstadt, Germany. It is true that this technology could not have caught on so quickly, if the

development of information technology in that decade had not, almost simultaneously, provided every mathematician and scientist with a PC, a workstation, or a microcomputer in the style of a Macintosh or ATARI.

Semigroup Forum, Journal of Lie Theory, and the Bulletin of the Australian Mathematical Society are among the pioneers of journals printed from author generated typography. The Managing Editor of most journals nowadays have to be typesetting and printing experts in addition to their conventional duties as editors.

In passing one should note a fact of which the younger generation does not even consciously take note: In the path of developing information technology electronically, the world around people who are involved with the written word, has changed dramatically in a period of some 30 years. Paper exists merely to be pushed into our programmed printers. Letters have become a thing of the past as e-mail has supplanted the submission letter even in submitting papers to the EDITOR of most journals (exceptions notwithstanding). Mathematicians have mostly quit scribbling formulae on paper and key in their ideas to be viewed on screen in TeX. Typewriters have all but gone the way of the dinosaurs.

6. The Structure of the Editorial Board

There are almost as many different editorial structures as there are different journals. Still one perceives two, perhaps three, patterns which divide editorials boards into basically different categories.

The first pattern is the highly centralized editorial board. Here the Managing EDITOR makes final decisions about accepting or rejecting papers, and he determines the currently valid editorial policies. In this structure, other members of the editorial board are often called "Associate EDITORs'". They may be appointed by the Managing EDITOR and are activated by being asked by the Managing EDITOR to take on the evaluation procedure of contributions that were submitted to the journal via the Managing EDITOR. The Associate EDITOR communicates with one or two or even three REFEREEs – as is the policy of a journal. In mathematics, the one REFEREE policy is customary. The use of more than two REFEREEs tends to slow down the process considerably. If the REFEREEs' reports have been received, the Associate EDITOR reports to the Managing EDITOR with a recommendation whether the submitted contribution should be published or not. As a rule, the Managing EDITOR will follow such a recommendation, certainly in those cases that are uncontroversial on the basis of the evidence. But the Managing EDITOR is free to arrive at a deviating final decision.

The second pattern is the decentralized Editorial Board. The Managing EDITOR is the central coordinator of the journal's operations, but each EDITOR decides independently and authoritatively on the acceptance and rejection of a contribution. He selects the REFEREE(s) and communicates with them and the authors. This set-up can often be recognized in the journal by the fact that the EDITOR who processed and accepted a paper is identified explicitly, for instance by the printed entry: "Communicated by [EDITOR's name follows]". In this editorial structure sometimes the Managing EDITOR is compelled to act as an Appeal court, for instance when an AUTHOR tries to get information from his communicating EDITOR and fails to get a response; such occurrences should not happen, but they do. In these instances a Managing EDITOR can often help, notably if the Managing Office keeps good records.

A third sample pattern appears to be between the two structures we described: Here the decisions are made by a "Board of EDITORs" or "Executive EDITORs" who arrive at decisions on acceptance and rejection by joint deliberation on the basis of information collected from REFEREEs.

As a general rule, the recommendations of the REFEREEs will determine the fate of the submissions. For instance in mathematics the cutting edge results have become so specialized that they have to be evaluated by the experts, and the optimal strategy in general is to follow the REFEREE's recommendation. This fact is generally acknowledged and accepted. But it also tempts editorial boards to use or abuse REFEREEs as scapegoats by soliciting recommendations to reject submissions. The letter with a request to referee a paper may then say: "We have more papers in the backlog than we can publish. Please be severe." Or it might say: "We aim to maintain the highest quality in our journal. In your assessment please apply strict standards." The REFEREE is put on the spot: He cannot concede that his standards are lower than those of the journal having asked his judgment, will write something like: "This paper is interesting, well written, easy to read, and is publishable somewhere, but does not come up to the standards of this journal" and that provides the EDITOR with the water to wash his hands in rejecting the paper. It would be preferable if the EDITORs themselves stood up for their decisions.

The rate of acceptance varies from one journal to the next. Naturally, prestigious journals have a high rate of rejection while journals with more modest ambitions tend to have a lower rejection rate. By way of example, Journal of Lie Theory (JOLT) is probably somewhere in the middle: Since January 2003, JOLT accepted 1605 pages and rejected 527 amounting to a 30% rejection rate per page numbers. The Journal of Research and Practice in Information Technology has a rejection rate of about 70% by this measure.

Backlog is the volume of accepted material waiting at a given time for publication usually measured in page numbers.

Managing EDITORs must watch this parameter carefully in order not to run into difficulty. At 14 November, 2004, the figures for Journal of Lie Theory were as follows

- Accepted and ready for publication: 372 pages
- Accepted but not in final form: 20 pages
- Pending with referees and editors: 371 pages
- Each issue has   350 pages

This meant that Issue number 1 of the year 2005 of about 350 pages was completely taken. If all pending articles were accepted, the year of 2005 would be completely booked with some residue going into the issue published in January 2006. This represents a waiting time to publication of more than 12 months, hypothetically, which is a tolerable waiting time, but is on the high side. This calls for alerting the entire editorial board about this situation.

This situation is somewhat mitigated by the recent development of "online" first publication. In the case of the Journal of Lie Theory, publication online takes effect often in a matter of days after a final version of an accepted article is received by the Managing EDITOR. Thus the 372 pages ready for publication are already published and accessible online.

Actually for the AUTHOR, two waiting time parameters are relevant:

- How long does the AUTHOR in general wait for a decision?
- How long does the AUTHOR have to wait to see an accepted paper in print?

In general we would expect that a waiting time of 6 months for a decision is reasonable. Depending on the REFEREEs' cooperation and the efficiency of editorial action, it may take longer until a decision reaches the AUTHOR. Young AUTHORs, whose professional career often depends on publishing, tend to be impatient. We dissuade impatient young colleagues from sending an inquiry to the journal of their choice before at least 6 months have elapsed.

The authors' personal experience as authors includes the story of a paper which they authored on the cardinal number attached to a topological space called its weight, and on the fact that for topological groups there is a cut-off cardinal number called c because it represents the number of elements in the Continuum of real numbers.

In an almost prophetic stroke of genius the authors titled the paper "Weight and c".

The waiting time from time of submission to the point of appearance approached 4 years. By any standard: that is a lot of waiting time. We concluded that paper, therefore with an acknowledgment: "we thank the editor for allowing the article to mature gently like vintage wine by letting it rest a lot."

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Karl Heinrich Hofmann began his studies of mathematics, physics, art history, and studio arts at the University of Tübingen, Germany, in 1952. After an excursion to the University of Hamburg, he obtained a doctorate in Tübingen and proceeded in 1960 to teach, for some twenty years, at Tulane University in New Orleans, USA. He was a Visiting Member of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton in 1967 and was Visiting Professor at the University of Paris VI in 1973. He has been Professor of Mathematics at the University of Technology of Darmstadt, Germany, since 1982. Sidney A. Morris and he have authored mathematical articles since 1977, and are currently applying finishing touches to their second book.

Karl Hofmann

Sidney Morris BSc Qld PhD Flinders is Professor of Informatics and Head of the School of Information Technology and Mathematical Sciences at the University of Ballarat and has held Professorships at four Australian universities, as well as the positions of Dean and Deputy Vice-Chancellor. He is the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Research and Practice in Information Technology, an Associate Editor of the Bulletin of the Australian Mathematical Society, and an Editor of the Journal of Group Theory. He is a Director of the Victorian Partnership for Advanced Computing, and a Fellow and Honorary Life Member of the Australian Mathematical Society. He has published three books and over 120 research papers in refereed international journals.

Sidney Morris