

To: INFORMS Board
Re: Annual Report for *Operations Research* (OPRE) Journal
From: Amy R. Ward, Editor-in-Chief (EiC)
Date: September 11, 2024

The *Operations Research* (OPRE) journal is a flagship journal for the INFORMS community. Its mission is to be the leading platform for innovative and impactful research in the field of Operations Research. My first priority as Editor-in-Chief (EiC) is to preserve and enhance this standing.

My term as EiC began January 1, 2024. I viewed the journal in good health overall, thanks to the excellent leadership of former EiC John Birge. In the following, I discuss what I have done with the journal so far, my plans for the future, and what help INFORMS can provide.

My focus since beginning my term as EiC has been on the following efforts:

- **Area Editor Turnover:** I replaced all Area Editors that had served 6 years (or more). There are currently 21 Area Editors, 15 of whom began their term January 1, 2024, and 6 of whom began their term January 1, 2021. In order to identify which new Area Editors to bring on, I had conversations with all Area Editors that served under John, as well as conversations with leading researchers in the community. I made commitment to the OPRE journal a requirement of assuming an Area Editor position, and I discussed with each new Area Editor what that meant, to ensure the individual had enough bandwidth to handle the position. I am happy to report that all Area Editors are diligent in carrying out their duties to OPRE, and make OPRE a priority.
- **Workflow and Paper Tracking:** I am committed to delivering a quality and timely review process for papers. This requires both that authors respect referee time and effort, and vice versa. To encourage authors to carefully think about the correct intellectual length for their paper, and to recognize that length may not indicate quality¹, I am attempting to tie review time to paper length, and I do not downgrade short papers by calling them Technical Notes when published. To encourage Area Editors, Associate Editors, and Reviewers to deliver their reports in a timely manner, I have weekly check-ins with the production manager for the journal, and I have an Assistant that helps me track workflow, and alerts me when papers are becoming late.
- **Writing of Journal Policies:** The journal has some operations that are done by institutional knowledge, but should be put in writing. As such, in consultation with the Area Editors, I have developed and published on the OPRE website the following: Review Process Details, Reviewer Guidelines, the Conflict-of-Interest Policy for the journal, Conference-to-Journal Submission Policy, Conference-Forward-to-Journal Procedure, Appeals Process Policy, and the Code and Data Disclosure Policy.
- **Establishing the New Data, Software, and Computation Area:** The main change to the Area Structure has been to add the Area of Data, Software and Computation. This Area focuses on defining and ensuring empirical rigor. Since OPRE is a more methodologically focused journal, for many papers submitted to the journal, the balance of the contribution is more from the methodological side than the empirical side. However, the INFORMS community is showing

¹ For example, Nash's groundbreaking dissertation on non-cooperative games was 28 pages.

more and more interest in empirical work, and OPRE must be able to handle that. There is now an enforced code and data disclosure policy for the journal, with a process for granting exemptions (for example, on the basis of code and data being non-public, but with pseudocode and synthetic data provided), which ensures transparency for empirical results. Unfortunately, OPRE does not have the manpower required to do a full code and data review for every paper accepted at the journal, because many individuals in the referee pool have skills slanted towards the methodological side, not the empirical side. As a result, we are working towards prioritizing code and data review for those papers whose contribution leans more on the empirical side. Then, the review team can determine in a holistic manner, based on the combined theoretical insights and empirical deductions in the paper, whether or not the paper meets the bar for acceptance. The long-term vision is to take advantage of the fact that the skills required to do code and data review are becoming more common in the referee pool (especially for newly minted PhDs).

- **Other Area Structure Changes:** All Areas updated their Area Editor statements, which resulted in the following changes, going by alphabetical order of Area name. The Energy, Environment, and Sustainability Area narrowed its focus to become the Energy and Environment Area, with Sustainability moving to the broadened former Policy Modeling and Public Sector OR Area, now the Societal Impact Area. The Revenue Management and Market Analytics Area is renamed to Markets, Platforms, and Revenue Management, to reflect the increased interest in Internet platforms. The Military and Homeland Security Area has broadened its interest, and is now the Defense and Security Area. The OR Practice Area is now the Real-World OR Innovations Area, to reflect re-thought Area guidelines. Finally, the journal has two back-up EiCs (Jim Dai and Jan Karel Lenstra, both with EiC experience) to handle papers for which I have a COI.
- **Context and Challenge Papers:** I experimented with a new paper category, called context and challenge. The intention was to have experts in various application domains, that also have strong methodological command of OR techniques, write papers that provide application context for the most important problems of our time, and challenge the OR community to contribute to them. I envisioned starting the category by inviting a select number of thought leaders to write the first papers, to kickstart the category. However, this effort has not had good uptake, and I am deciding whether or not to close this paper category. Also, I have struggled with how to do the review process for such papers.

My main plans for the future are:

- **Continue What is Started:** The initiatives discussed above are ongoing. I am emphasizing making changes in a sustainable way rather than a fast way, which requires prioritizing where to focus effort.
- **Review Area Performance Each Year:** I plan to meet individually with each Area at the end of the year, in order to discuss how the Area is going and review Associate Editor performance.
- **Establish Reviewer and Associate Editor Meritorious Service Awards:** Timely reports from the review team that are of strong quality are essential to the reputation and standing of the journal. The ideal review team reports are ones that genuinely help the author achieve a stronger paper, which requires much time and intellectual effort on the part of the review team.

However, Associate Editors and Reviewers are anonymous. I would like a process for recognizing exceptional work from these key players.

- **Publicity for the Journal:** The journal is publishing strong papers. I would like to better publicize their content. I do not have a strategy for how to do this, but this is on my mind, and I am open to suggestions.

The main way in which the INFORMS board can help me is:

- **Improved ScholarOne Functionality:** I am continually working around ScholarOne Issues. I am happy to share my list of some issues.

Below are some statistics for the journal, as well as some commentary from me:

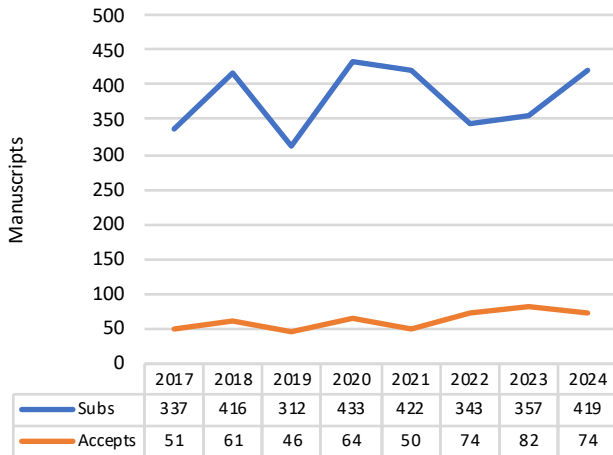
- The Q2 journal dashboard data (see last page) shows that submissions and acceptance rate are steady, and that the mean and median time to first and final decision is down. The issue backlog has crept upwards, which is not desirable. The impact factor has decreased, and that is true of other journals as well. From past discussion, the decrease is due to a result of a change in how impact factors were calculated. My focus is to ensure good processes, that result in authors submitting their best work. I will continue with that focus, as that is most important for journal reputation, which is most important. Impact factors are an imperfect measure of journal reputation, and must be treated as such.
- The average time for a Reviewer to submit his/her report is 52 days for first submissions and 44 days for revisions (Data from ScholarOne). I do not feel the need to push to bring this down further, and instead prefer to focus on review quality.
- For manuscript submitted between January 1, 2024, and August 19, 2024, 15.9% have been accepted. The reject decisions have been divided between 53.14% that were rejected immediately, and 30.96% that were rejected after going out for review. In comparison, for manuscripts submitted between January 1, 2023, and August 19, 2023, 16.24% were accepted. The reject decisions were divided between 27.84% that were rejected immediately and 55.93% that were rejected after going out for review. This is worth observing that we are rejecting more manuscript immediately, and this is something for me to watch. (Data from ScholarOne.)
- The Area Editors are busy, and have handled the following number of papers since their term began January 1, 2024. (Data from ScholarOne.)

Area	# of Manuscripts Handled Since 1/1/2024
<i>Decision Analysis</i>	
David Brown	12
Iliia Tsetlin	21
<i>Energy and Environment</i>	
Golbon Zakeri	24
<i>Financial Engineering</i>	
Agostino Capponi	22
Xuedong He	27
<i>Machine Learning and Data Science</i>	
Xi Chen	34
Dennis Zhang	36

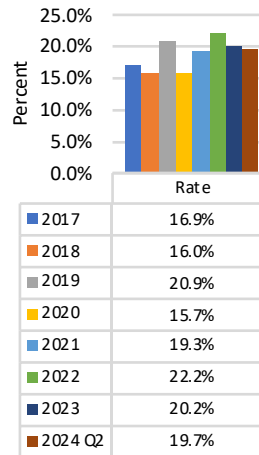
Markets, Platforms, and Revenue Management	
Rene Caldentey	27
Ilan Lobel	28
Defense and Security	
Cole Smith	9
Operations and Supply Chain	
Rouba Ibrahim	39
Francis de Vericourt	22
Optimization	
Samuel Burer	45
Dan Iancu	39
Real-World OR Innovations	
Turgay Ayer	13
Societal Impact	
Andrew Schaefer	26
Simulation	
Sandeep Juneja	21
Stochastic Models	
Raman Randhawa	16
Neil Walton	28
Transportation	
Jose Correa	28
Data, Software, and Computation	
Ted Ralphs*	1

*Ted is leading the creation of the code and data review standards. We are doing this slowly, and ensuring that the procedures put in place are sustainable, and can scale. As such, this took a fair amount of effort to be ready to proceed with the first paper, whose process completed in the Summer of 2024. For that first paper, we are not determining how to indicate what was done in the typeset version, which is again taking time to decide what to do, remembering that what we do for this one sets the standard for papers that follow.

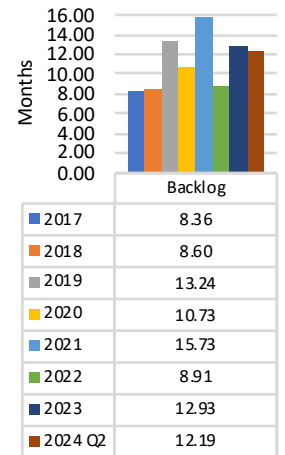
Q2 Original Submissions & Acceptances



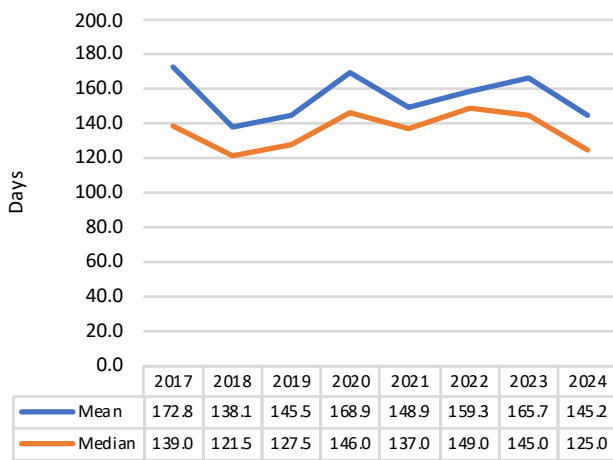
Acceptance Rate



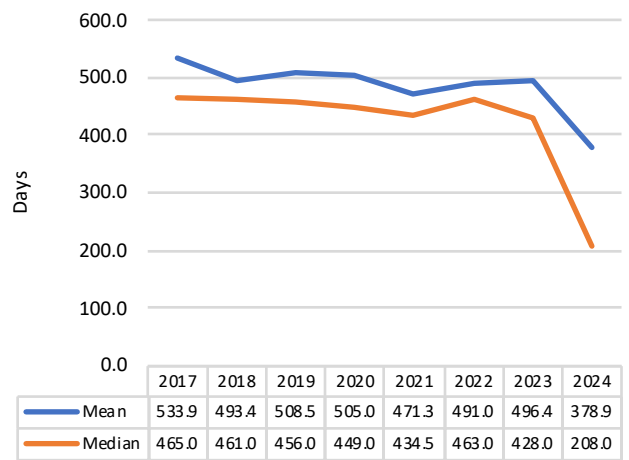
Issue Backlog



Q2 Mean & Median Time to First Decision*



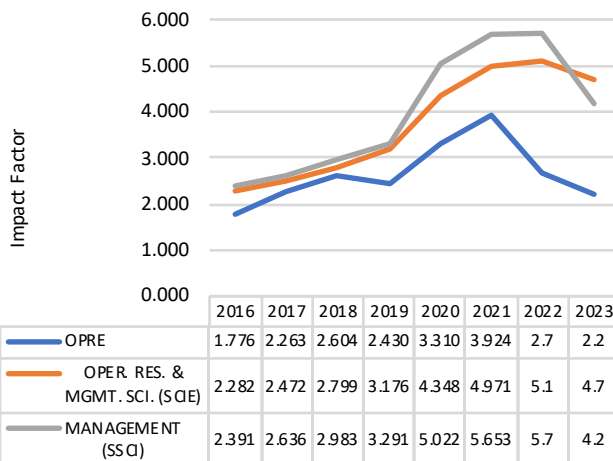
Q2 Mean & Median Time to Final Decision*



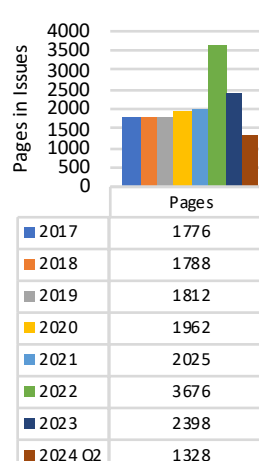
*All original submissions and resubmissions sent for external review decided within the reporting period.

*All original submissions, resubmissions, and revisions sent for external review decided within the reporting period.

Impact Factor vs Aggregate Impact Factor



Pages Published



Q2 Usage

