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10 June 1997

Anyone Concerned

Dear Colleague:

Annoyed at the length of time it takes to get a review back from JAS, I did a little research project to see how long it takes for a paper to get into print. I compared the first three months of JAS in 1997 (6 issues for Jan., Feb. Mar.) with the first three months in 1970 (Jan., Mar. May). I used the publication date on the journal to measure the publication time. It is a small sample of about 80 papers, but I think the conclusions are robust. Numbers for other AMS journals are probably similar. I have not included Notes and Correspondence in the calculations of page length or publication delays. Here are the results:

Year	Articles	pages per Article	Notes & Corres.	Days S-P Sub-Pub	Days A-P Acc-Pub	Days S-A Sub-Acc	Pub as submitted
1970	44	10.4	20	179	134	45	20
1997	39	18.2	7	461	202	260	0

Codes: S-P = Submission to Publication Delay, A-P = Acceptance to Publication Delay,
S-A = Submission to Acceptance Delay. All in days.

The obvious comments:

- 1) Average time between first submission and publication has increased from 6 months to 15 months.
- 2) Of the additional 9 months that it now takes new work to appear in print, 7 are accounted for by the review process and 2 are accounted for by the publication process. On average, it now takes more than 8 months to complete the review process and another 7 months after acceptance before publication occurs. This is to be compared with six weeks and 4.5 months in 1970.
- 3) Articles have nearly doubled in average length since 1970 from 10 pages to 18.
- 4) Much less use is made of Notes and Correspondence
- 5) In 1970, almost half the papers were published as first submitted. This never happens now.
- 6) All of the above is troubling, especially 1 and 2. In terms of scientific communication to foster growth of the knowledge base, JAS is now much less effective than it was in 1970, because of the large delay between when work is current and when it is published.

Sincerely,

Dennis L. Hartmann
Professor