

FROM THE EDITORS

In the Beginning . . .

The purpose of this paper is to outline the essence of an approach for understanding the functioning of formal organizations.

With those bold words, the *Journal of the Academy of Management*, later to be named the *Academy of Management Journal*, was born in April 1958. Those words comprise the first sentence of the first article of the first issue. Their author was William B. Wolf of the University of Washington.

That article was nine pages long. In it, the author sought to provide an understanding of the functioning of formal organizations. In nine pages. Bold words, indeed. But those words, that inaugural issue, and the more than 200 issues of the *Journal* that have appeared since, can tell today's readers much about how the profession of management scholar has evolved. These past issues deserve a look.

The Inaugural Issue

Some of the insights that emerge are light. Consider the guidelines for authors that appear in the preface to the first issue. They note, "All manuscripts should be double-spaced" (some things never change) and "A single copy will suffice" (other things do). Interestingly, they also indicate that "typing . . . is acceptable" but apparently not required. Preparing manuscripts in longhand? No wonder the articles were short!

And were they ever short. Combined, the eight articles in the first issue fill just 63 pages. In addition to these full-length articles, shorter pieces were also encouraged. As Editor Paul M. Dauten, Jr., stated, "Shorter, abbreviated notes on some specific aspect of management thought . . . will be particularly welcome." Contrasting these with full-length articles, Dauten commented, "Many of us have such specific, detached ideas on various topics and these notes could be submitted for the consideration of other members of the Academy without investing extensive scholarly effort." (A show of hands: How many of you know anyone with a department chair or dean likely to define 8 pages as an extensive scholarly effort?)

The first issue laid the foundation for many of the norms that drive the *Journal* today. For example, *AMJ* prides itself on being a developmental journal.

In his call for articles, the original editor noted that he "stands ready to provide help in readying [articles] for publication." And perhaps because the manuscripts of the time were shorter, or because the founders made a heroic developmental commitment, that first call tells potential contributors this: "Stylistic assistance is available to authors through our University's English Department." Now that's service.

But it was service with a purpose. The stated objective of the *Journal* was to contribute to the Academy's effort "to foster the search for truth and the general advancement of learning through free discussion and research in the field of management." We could be (and probably would be) wordier, but I doubt we could say it better today.

The founders were blessed with foresight. Apparently aware of the risks of scholarly writing, the editor calls for "well-written" articles that appear in a "straightforward style of English—esoteric writing will find no place in the Academy's Journal." (Thank goodness they nipped *that* in the bud.)

Although it is always entertaining to explore history from our current perspective, it is also informative. One cannot read these early passages without recognizing that from the start, this was a serious scholarly endeavor. For example, a blind review process was part of the *Journal's* protocol from the outset. In the days before electronic word processing, white-out, and inexpensive photocopying, such a commitment was effortful and costly. At the *Journal*, "All manuscripts [emphasis in the original] will be retyped and identified only by a code number." Many fine journals have only relatively recently made this switch.

Trends

The first issue of the *Journal* provided insights, but to identify trends we needed a broader perspective. Thus, we sampled the contents of the issues of the *Journal* that have appeared over the past 45 years. Our "methodology" was to review the first issue published each year, noting various characteristics of the issue, the articles in it, and the authors who wrote them. Although not exhaustive, this sample revealed several interesting trends.

The most striking trend may be the increase in

the sheer volume of work appearing in the pages of the *Journal*. As Figure 1 shows, issues have increased in size from just over 60 pages to an average of over 200 pages today. In addition, the number of issues per year has doubled. Thus, since its beginning, the number of pages of scholarly work produced by the *Journal* and its authors has increased sixfold. We management scholars are a prolific lot.

Some of this increase in volume may be a consequence of the more complex “production process” facing authors today. Although the number of articles per issue has not changed much over the years, the average length of those articles has. In contrast with the 8-page average of the first issue, by the mid-1990s articles averaged more than 25 printed pages in length. (An increased number of research notes and a change in format has pulled that average back below 20 in the last few years.) Much of this growth is due to the added complexity of our research methodologies, as reflected in the average number of pages devoted to methods, illustrated in Figure 2. Of course, prior to the birth of the *Academy of Management Review* in 1976, *AMJ* published both conceptual and empirical work, so the average number of pages devoted to research methods was lower in those early years. However, these numbers show a marked increase in methods content has occurred, even since the founding of *AMR*.

In addition to using more complex research methodologies, our profession also continues to draw on broader and deeper literatures, both empirical and theoretical. This trend is reflected in the number of pages devoted to references, which has also grown markedly since the 1980s. (Of course, we recognize that alternative explanations for “reference creep” exist, as well as different evaluations of whether it is a good trend or a bad one. We will not address those concerns here.)

One additional piece of evidence supports the

increasing complexity of what the authors of management studies do—the decline of the single-author paper. Today’s *AMJ* manuscript is three times as long as it used to be, is significantly more complex methodologically, and draws on a reference base three times the size of that typical in earlier work. Thus, it is not surprising that fewer and fewer individuals initiate and succeed in publishing solo work. In our sample of papers, it was not until 1961 that the first article with multiple authors appeared, with the second following in 1967. However, since 1999, about 70 percent of all papers appearing in *AMJ* have been authored by multiple scholars. Management research has become, in the main, a team sport.

The broader, international arena in which we now work may also contribute to the increasing complexity of management research. The first non-North American author in our sample appeared in 1961, and the second, in 1969. Contrast that showing with the record of the past five years, during which nearly 30 percent of *AMJ*’s articles had at least one non-North American author. It’s true: all the world’s (now) a stage.

What Gets Published?

At a recent Academy meeting, the author of a very nice paper on ethical decision making was asked why he hadn’t submitted it to *AMJ*. He replied, “Because everyone knows *AMJ* is a macro journal!” A surprising statement, to be sure, especially given that the *Journal*’s two most recent editors are micro scholars. Further, the current associate editor model makes it very likely that every submitted manuscript will be handled by someone on the appropriate side of the micro-macro ridge. (Prior to the advent of the associate editor system, most recent editors employed as

FIGURE 1
Trends in Volume

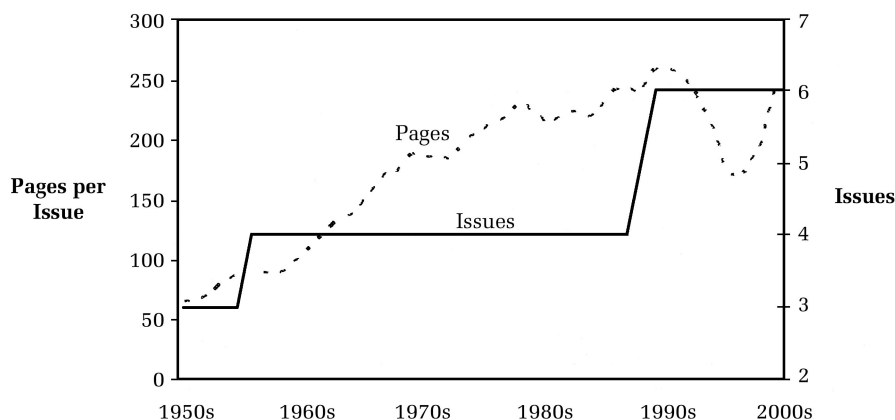
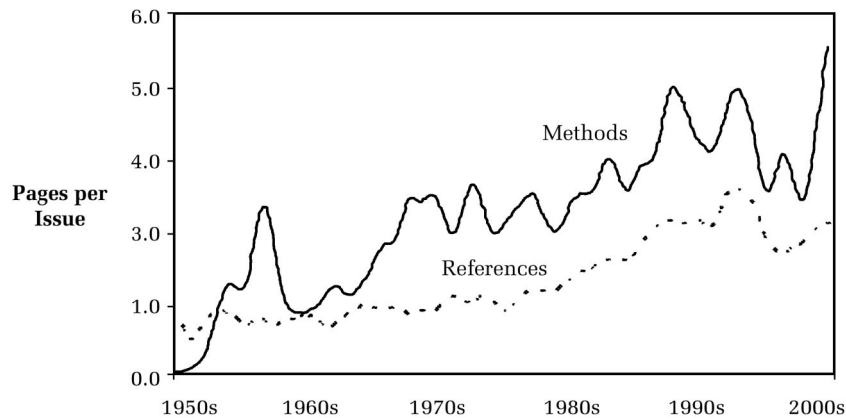


FIGURE 2
Trends in Content



many as four consulting editors in an effort to wrestle with such issues.)

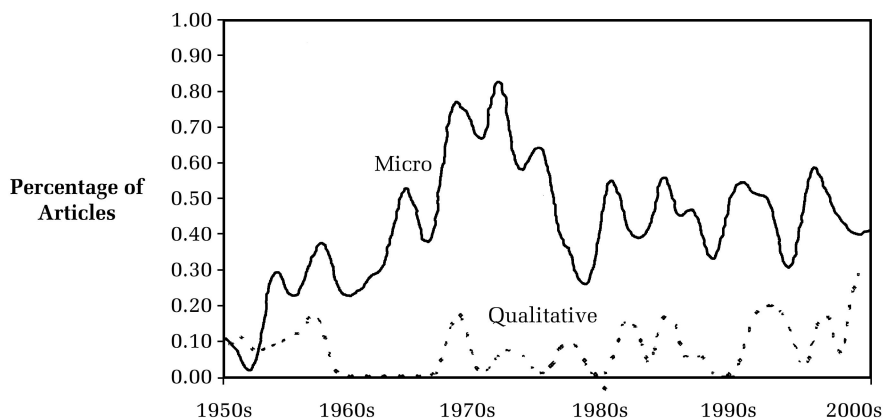
So we suspected that the ethicist's "macro journal" notion was an outdated stereotype—stereotypes die hard, even (or especially?) among scientists. But as empiricists, we decided to look at the data on the micro-macro breakdown of the work accepted for *AMJ* over the years. In our exploration of the micro-macro trends in the *Journal* over the years, our distinction was coarse-grained. If a paper addressed individuals or teams as its main focus, we categorized it as micro. If it addressed organizations or extraorganizational issues, we categorized it as macro.

What we found was a great deal of noise. The trend plotted in Figure 3 has been passed through a smoothing algorithm five times. It confirms that in the early days of the *Journal*, micro papers really did not receive as much attention as macro papers. This is probably not surprising, in that in the 1950s and 1960s management had not yet been integrated with I/O and social psychology. As indicated in

that opening line of the inaugural issue, in the beginning issues of management were most often issues of organization. However, by the mid-1970s micro-oriented work was more than holding its own, with micro and macro perspectives alternately producing the majority of papers in the issues published throughout the 1990s.

One additional observation is that the 2000s saw an increased number of issues containing a special research forum (SRF), *AMJ*'s term for a collection of articles focused on a specific research area. Thus, in exploring micro-macro trends we examined all the issues published in 2000–02, rather than only the first issue of a year. (In 2002, for example, the first issue contained a 14-article SRF on institutional theory, considerably skewing the micro-macro assessment for that year.) Figure 3 reveals that since 2000, micro-oriented research represents just over 40 percent of all articles published in *AMJ*. However, nearly all the special forums appearing in that period were primarily macro-oriented. For articles appearing outside an SRF, micro-oriented

FIGURE 3
Trends in Focus



work comprised over 60 percent of all articles. So does everybody know that *AMJ* is a macro journal? We hope so. We also hope that everyone also knows it is a micro journal, too!

Another, similar, issue arises from time to time, the issue of whether *AMJ* welcomes qualitative research. Many researchers are aware that *AMJ*'s current editor, Tom Lee, has published a volume on qualitative research methods, a positive sign in and of itself. But Figure 3 also indicates that although qualitative work has occupied a minority position in *AMJ*, its presence has been felt throughout the *Journal*'s history. These data are also quite noisy (they, too, were smoothed), but they appear to suggest that something resembling a trend may be emerging, especially in the 1990s and beyond.

Other Observations

The preface to the first issue identified a broad spectrum of potential contributions: management thought, philosophy, theory, curriculum building, and teaching. It must have brought joy to the founders to watch these varied contributions gain hold in the *Journal*, many to such an extent that additional journals have been initiated to accommodate demand. The *Academy of Management Review* was the first of these, providing a forum for new theoretical frameworks. The *Academy of Management Executive*, founded in 1987, provides a more direct conduit between scholars and practitioners. And just last year, the *Academy of Management Journal of Learning and Education* began to provide a way for management scholars to advance the learning and teaching of organizational studies. It also must have pleased *AMJ*'s initiators to see that early services the *Journal* provided, like publishing dissertation abstracts and case studies, were later picked up in other, more broadly organized, formats.

One feature of the *Journal*'s past bears special note. In 1968, the *Journal* initiated a segment entitled "Communications." This feature provided a forum in which scholars could speak to speak to one another and provide insights and criticisms on published work. This objective seems consistent with the *Journal*'s mission of advancing learning through free discussion. By 1972, however, these discourses stopped. Since 1994, *AMR* has provided

such a venue in its "Dialogue" section, and its "Information for Contributors" welcomes "point-counterpoint" debates. Perhaps this generation's scholarly lives might be somewhat enhanced by a renewed opportunity for conversations like this on the empirical side.

Conclusion

So what is one to make of all of this? Are these trends real or imaginary? Do they represent good or bad forces? Are they driven by science or by the reward systems that scientists face? We anticipate that the numbers, insights, and trends we have unearthed will serve as something of an inkblot test for many management scholars; they will see in them what they wish to see. Thus, we will not attempt here to make much additional sense of them here. To be honest, we are just as curious about others' responses to our findings as were about producing and organizing them. So please share your thoughts with us, if you care to.

In the preface to the first issue of the *Journal*, Dauten wrote, "The publication of a management journal by the Academy of Management represents a significant benchmark in the history of this organization." How true. Looking back at what these individuals created, one can see that they were "founding fathers" (yes, they were all men) in the truest sense. They did a great many things right. As a result, the modest 63-page journal they initiated back in 1958 grew into a publication that is at or near the top of every ranking of scholarly management publications. *AMJ* distributes about 15,000 copies of every issue, in 83 nations. Today's scholars owe a great deal to the people who were instrumental in laying the foundation for what we enjoy today. They were Editor Paul M. Dauten, Jr., Associate Editor Dalton E. McFarland, and the members of the Research and Publications Committee (prior to and during 1958): Wayne G. Broehl, Keith Davis, Preston P. LeBreton, Merten J. Mandeville, and Franklin G. Moore.

Next time you submit a paper to any Academy journal, think of them and say thanks. And while you are at it, say thanks to first author Professor Wolf, too, for setting a high, bold, bar.

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Editor's note: **Dwight Lemke** (James Cook University) will be stepping down as *AMJ*'s WINDEX (Web page and index) editor. On behalf of the editorial team, I sincerely thank Dwight for his hard work and service. I am pleased to announce that **Martin Evans** (professor emeritus, University of Toronto) is our new WINDEX editor. Welcome to the team, Martin.

Tom Lee

