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EDITORIAL

As Mike Worboys put it in the editorial introduction to the first issue of the Journal of Spatial Information Science (JOSIS): “our aspiration is to make [JOSIS] the best journal in our field, not only in terms of the technical quality of its papers, but also due to its novel format” [2]. Although only the second issue of the journal, this editorial still seems a good moment to review how JOSIS is traveling towards our aspiration.

One important attribute of a good journal is a rapid and streamlined peer-review process. In measuring the progress of JOSIS in this area, there are a few statistics that may be instructive. Currently JOSIS has an average time from article submission to decision on *first* review of 73 days. We also have a policy that all submissions undergo at most *two* rounds of reviews. The objective of this policy is to avoid the increasingly common phenomenon of “authorship by review,” where papers get locked into near-interminable cycles of review and revision. Adopting a two-round review system occasionally results in rejecting submitted JOSIS articles that might have been acceptable given additional revision and review rounds. However, we believe this is a fair price to pay for avoiding fatiguing both authors and reviewers with excessively long and unmanageable review cycles. Of course, authors of papers rejected at the second round are still free to revise their article further, using their second-round review comments, and then resubmit to another journal. The benefit of this policy is that JOSIS can boast an average *total* time in review (i.e., time from original submission to final accept or reject decision, but excluding any time taken by the authors for revisions) of just 96 days—surely comparable with the best journals in our field.

Measuring the impact of JOSIS is a little harder. At the time of writing, JOSIS had attracted a modest 17 citations to research articles published in JOSIS issue 1, according to Google Scholar. However, JOSIS is not yet one year old. As an open-access journal, freely available to readers around the world with one click of a DOI, JOSIS has an advantage over commercial closed-access journals in widely disseminating the latest research. As a result, we anticipate not just the number, but the rate of citations to JOSIS articles to grow steadily into the future. As a member of the JOSIS community, you can help this process by reading JOSIS articles, pointing colleagues to relevant articles, and citing JOSIS articles yourself when relevant to your own research (ideally including the DOI in your citation).

Another question that is often asked in connection with impact is: “When JOSIS will be included in important indexes, like Elsevier Scopus and Thompson Reuters ISI?” The short answer to this question is: “As soon as possible!” The process for inclusion requires that a journal has an established record of respected, impactful, regular, and high-quality published articles. Our plan is to apply for inclusion by the end of our second year. As long as JOSIS is a respected outlet for high-quality scientific results within our community, we believe the inclusion of JOSIS in commercial journal rankings is only a matter of time.

Finally, the hardest thing to measure is, of course, article quality. One relevant statistic is that JOSIS currently has a 33% acceptance rate (over the 27 submitted articles that, as

of the time of publication of issue 2, have a final decision). However, acceptance rate is a poor measure of journal quality. Acceptance rate is insensitive to the quality of *submitted* papers (e.g., low acceptance rates does not necessarily indicate high quality publications if the original submissions were all of low quality). We believe that the papers submitted to JOSIS are of a very high quality. The JOSIS discussion forum is an important mechanism in regulating the original submission quality. As submitted articles under review are freely available to read and comment on in the discussion forum, this discourages lower quality submissions. Perhaps most importantly it provides transparency, allowing you to form your own view on the quality of the submissions JOSIS receives (and so make up your own mind on whether our review process is fostering the highest quality).

Another JOSIS policy aimed squarely at maintaining the highest standards of quality is our special features policy. JOSIS encourages and supports special features from the community. But articles submitted to special features are held to exactly the same standards (using exactly the same review process) as regular JOSIS articles (see <http://josis.org/index.php/josis/about/editorialPolicies>, “Special features”). Again, you may judge for yourself. In this issue of JOSIS, a special feature on *behavior monitoring and interpretation* contains an outstanding accepted feature article on video visual analytics [1].

Ultimately, when assessing the quality of published JOSIS articles it is up to you, the reader, to be the judge. JOSIS may only be two issues old, but I believe the articles in issue 1 and now issue 2 already compare very favorably with the best our field has to offer. There is no question in my mind that free and open access journals, like JOSIS, can equal and better the quality of traditional publishing models.

References

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