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## IJARE - Six Years On: An Editor's Report

Stephen J. Langendorfer

*Bowling Green State University*, [slangen@bgsu.edu](mailto:slangen@bgsu.edu)

Robert Turick

*Bowling Green State University*

Chelsea Kaunert

*Bowling Green State University*

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## ***IJARE* – Six Years On: An Editor's Report**

**Stephen J. Langendorfer, Robert Turick, and Chelsea Kaunert**

In September 2012, I had the wonderful opportunity to attend for the second time another delightful session of the Irish Lifesaving Foundation's annual conference on drowning prevention. John Connolly, the honorary executive director, had invited me to present a report on the drowning prevention articles we have published in the *International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education (IJARE)* throughout our six volumes. While I was preparing that presentation, it dawned on me that I really ought to summarize a number of variables associated with *IJARE*'s first six years for you loyal subscribers and regular readers. It seems to me that such a summary might identify some useful, or at least interesting, trends in topics, authors, and other pertinent variables to guide Human Kinetics, our Editorial Board, and myself in making decisions about future directions that *IJARE* might take. My hope is that you will find at least some of these data to be mildly interesting and even informative. And, here's to success for *IJARE*'s next six years and volumes!

To produce this report, I acknowledge the diligence and hard work of my two collaborators and co-authors, Robert Turick and Chelsea Kaunert, Masters students in Bowling Green State University's graduate Kinesiology program. Robert and Chelsea were in charge of compiling information about all the articles we have published in the 24 issues of the first six volumes and placing the data in a spreadsheet from which I could parse the information. Without them, this report would not have been possible. I take responsibility for any errors in calculation, tabulation, or interpretation.

I must pay due credit to Kevin Moran from whom I borrowed the phrasing for the title of this editorial based on the catchy title of his article, "Rock-Based Fisher Safety Promotion: Five Years On," published one and a half years ago (2011, 5(2), pp. 164-173). I was intrigued by its wording. I felt similar phrasing might capture what I hoped to accomplish in describing the status and progress of *IJARE* over its first six years of publication. Thanks for the loan of the phrase, Kev!

### **Types of Manuscripts**

The *International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education* publishes a variety of types of papers. The category with the largest number of published articles is the Original Research category (n = 129) as should be appropriate for a scholarly

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Steve Langedodfrer is the Editor of *IJARE* and he is with the Exercise Science Program, School of Human Movement, Sport and Leisure Studies (HMSLS) at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, OH. Robert Turick and Chelsea Kaunert are graduate students in the graduate Kinesiology program, School of HMSLS at Bowling Green State University.

journal. A second main category is labeled Educational Articles ( $n = 29$ ). In addition, we have published several Invited Review papers ( $n = 10$ ). Other categories of published works include Letters to the Editor ( $n = 11$ ), Position Statements, Reports, or White Papers ( $n = 5$ ), Scientific Reviews ( $n = 6$ ), and Media Reviews ( $n = 13$ ). Finally, I have begun each issue with a short introduction and summary of the papers (called “In This Issue”) and we also have offered a variety of editorials, at least one per issue (see Table 1), for which I have served as the primary editor-in-chief in these first 24 issues with some able assistance and contributions from J.B. Smith and Bruce Becker, members of our Editorial Board who volunteered to put their own thoughts to paper.

During these first six volumes and 24 issues, we have published 168 different research, educational, or invited papers, all of which were peer-reviewed, the standard for any scholarly publication. With those 168 peer-reviewed manuscripts, we averaged about 7 refereed papers per issue, with a range from 5 to 10 articles per issue. For each annual volume, this meant an average of 28 articles with the actual numbers of papers ranging from a low of 24 (Volumes 5 and 6) to a high of 34 reviewed articles in Volume 2. In addition to the introductions and editorials, the Journal welcomed 11 different Letters to the Editor, submitted by six different individuals. We also published 13 aquatic media reviews, authored by three different reviewers. Of particular importance, the journal published two comprehensive reports (i.e., the 2007 World Drowning Report and the 2009 U.S. Lifeguard Standards Coalition Report, which included summaries of 15 scientific reviews), two agency position statements, and six scientific reviews and advisories from the American Red Cross Scientific Advisory Committee and 33 abstracts from several aquatic exercise research conferences. Recently, we also published “Step into Swim,” a White Paper by Tom Lachocki, CEO of the National Swimming Pool Foundation (NSPF; available open access on the journal website, <http://journals.humankinetics.com/IJARE> ). We have summarized all these categories for easy reference in Table 1.

**Table 1 Type and Number of Articles Published During First Six Volumes of the *International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education* (2007-2012)**

Type of Published Article	Number Published
Research (peer reviewed)	129
Educational (peer reviewed)	29
Invited (peer reviewed)	10
Position statements	2
Major reports	2
Scientific Reviews (expert review)	7
White Paper	1
Media Reviews	13
In This Issue introductions	24
Editorials	25
Conference abstracts	33

## Topics

Summarizing the topics of the published peer-reviewed articles was one of the most challenging parts of this report. I had anticipated that we could fairly easily identify and categorize topics simply by compiling a list of the keywords. Unfortunately, I realized that many of the published papers had omitted the keywords within the paper following the abstract where they normally should have appeared. The keywords submitted by the authors indeed were listed for all papers in Manuscript Central, our online software for submitting and reviewing manuscripts, but summarizing them over six years was not a report that was readily available for this summary.

Instead, we created a rough categorization/taxonomy of published and peer-reviewed papers using the titles and my own familiarity and review of each of the papers. We ended up with 19 different categories, which certainly are not mutually exclusive nor necessarily comprehensive. At least one published article was identified for each category. The most common category, drowning prevention/drowning, was the main or secondary topic of 38 different published articles during this past six years. Close behind in frequency were papers categorized as lifesaving/lifeguarding/rescues and on aquatic exercise and physiology with 33 articles on each. Other particularly frequent categories (i.e., those categories with 10 or more articles) included swimming/water competence/water safety (12 articles), swimming/water safety instruction (16 articles), aquatic therapy and rehabilitation (10 articles), adapted aquatics (11 articles), and risk management/aquatic facility and program management/ legal issues (17 articles). Refer to Table 2 for the 19 topical categories and their frequencies.

Several notes about the categories and their frequencies may be in order. Astute readers will recall that *IJARE*'s mission explicitly limits the Journal to "non-competitive" swimming and aquatic topics, but you may notice at least two categories (i.e., entries/diving/racing starts and competitive swimming-related/Masters) with a total of 18 articles that indeed have competitive swimming themes. In each case, it was the judgment of the editor, Editorial Board, and/or peer reviewers that the submitted manuscripts contained important enough information that, although overlapping into the competitive swimming domain, the manuscript still fit within *IJARE*'s mission and scope. In fact, I would strongly recommend the series of studies examining issues related to water entry and racing starts that emanated from the Councilman Center for Aquatic Research as a model line of inquiry and one that already has contributed a great deal to the discussion about "what is a safe headfirst entry depth."

Some readers might take issue with the first and third categories (i.e., swimming/water safety/water competence and drowning prevention/drowning) being overly broad and actually being able to apply to virtually every paper in *IJARE*. Initially, we had similar concerns, but it became relatively easy to differentiate other more primary categories for many papers. Of more concern perhaps might be an inherent bias that the first author of this editorial could have had with both of those categories, since he is actively involved in research and other projects on those topics. In the end, we make no great claims that our categories are anything more than handy descriptive ones that allowed us to further group papers into somewhat more common categories. We certainly would welcome any other attempt to taxonomically classify the published articles in *IJARE* that might provide greater

**Table 2 Summary of Frequencies of Different Topic Areas for Peer-Reviewed Papers Submitted to the *International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education* in the First Six Volumes (2007-2012)**

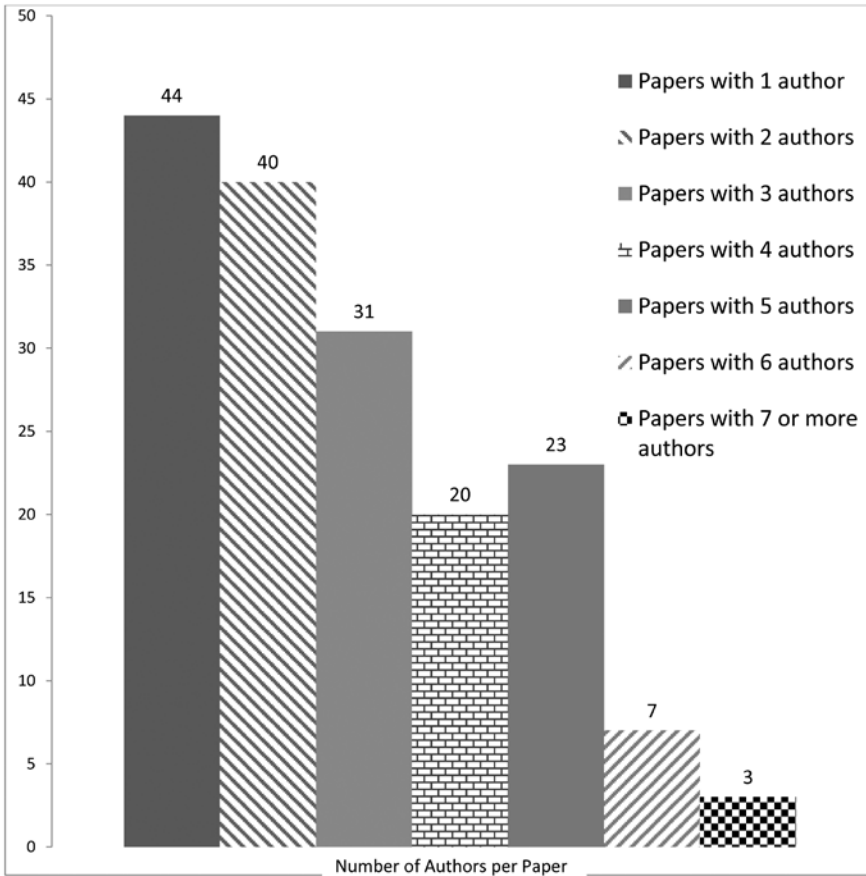
Topic ID #	Topic Category	Frequency
1	Swimming/water safety/water competence - general	12
2	Swimming/water safety instruction	16
3	Drowning prevention/drowning	38
4	Lifesaving, lifeguarding, rescues	33
5	Lifeguard competitions	1
6	Swimming and water safety related to minority groups	5
7	Aquatic exercise/physiology	33
8	Aquatic therapy/rehabilitation	10
9	Adapted aquatics	11
10	Water entry/diving/racing starts	10
11	SCUBA/snorkeling	1
12	Risk management/facility or program management/legal issues	17
13	Competitive-swimming related/Masters swimming	6
14	Aquatic-related first aid and CPR	8
15	Boating/personal watercraft	1
16	Water treatment/water chemistry	5
17	Aquatic art/literature/humanities	3
18	Aquatic health issues	6
19	Aquatic research methods/techniques	1

*Note.* Some articles were categorized into more than one category so this list totals > 168. The authors do not claim that the list is comprehensive, but primarily for descriptive and illustrative purposes.

validity, perhaps by using all of the keywords. In fact, to encourage such an endeavor, we would be glad to share our raw data and spreadsheets. Simply contact the first author if you have an interest in pursuing these analyses further.

## Authors

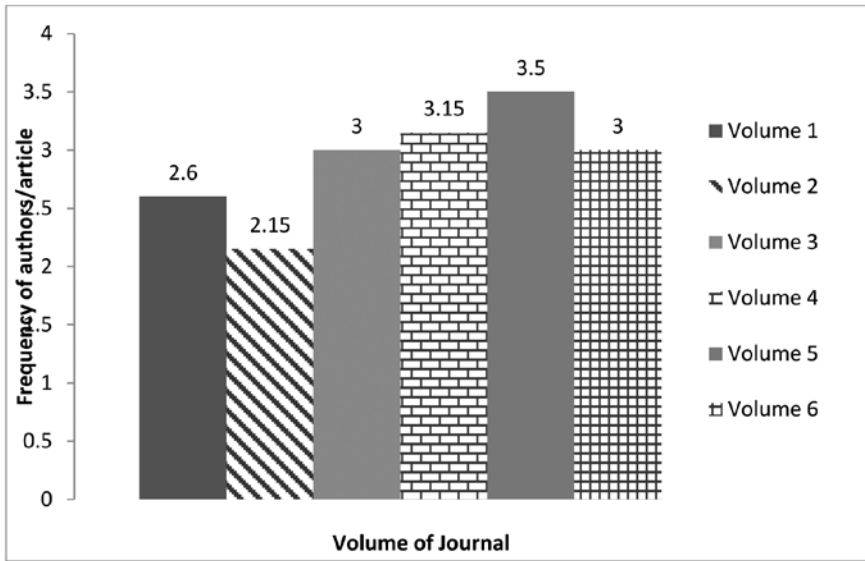
For the 168 published peer-reviewed papers in the first six years of *IJARE*, we had a total of 479 authors (who of course are not all different people). The number of authors per article ranged from one to 11. On average across the six volumes each article averaged 2.85 authors with a median of 2.5 authors, but the mode or most frequent number of authors equaled just one. The most frequent numbers of authors per article ended up as 44 single-authored papers, followed by 41 dual authorships, and 31 triple authorships. From our own personal experiences, the collaboration between a pair or trio of authors can often be a very productive working relationship, so the large numbers of pairs and trios is not particularly surprising. Of course, in aquatics we also have a number of persons who write well alone and so the modal value of single authorships is hardly shocking. See Figure 1.



**Figure 1** — Number of authors and co-authors of peer reviewed papers published in the first six volumes of the *International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education* (2007-2012).

The overall average (of 2.85 authors per paper and median of 2.5 authors) further confirms that the distribution of authors per article was indeed a highly skewed distribution as one can easily observe in Figure 1. Recently we discovered that the American Psychological Association (APA), whose publication format *IJARE* uses, strongly discourages authorship numbers exceeding six. Across the first six volumes we ended up violating that stricture only three times. Two papers had seven authors and one, a report of an international project (i.e., “Can You Swim?”), had 11 authors. Presuming that APA feels that it is unlikely that more than six persons can contribute meaningfully to any single publication, *IJARE* will seek to comply except in rare instances where the justice for listing additional authors can be demonstrated.

As we compiled these data, we had a sense that the number of authors per article was increasing over the past several volumes. In other words, we felt perhaps more or larger collaborative teams of authors were choosing to submit and get manuscripts published in *IJARE* during each subsequent volume. Figure 2 shows the number of



**Figure 2** — Authors per peer-reviewed article by volume in *International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education* (2007-2012).

authors per paper per volume of the Journal as a way of checking our “hunch.” You will note that while not statistically analyzed, one could conclude there indeed has been an upward direction in the number of authors per paper over the six volumes. The high average of 3.5 authors per paper in Volume 5 should be viewed with caution because that was the volume in which the “Can You Swim?” paper co-authored by the 11 investigators from five different countries was published.

Table 3 illustrates the frequency with which the 479 authorships identified during the first 6 years were distributed as authors or co-authors of one or more reviewed papers published within *IJARE*. It is not at all surprising that most individuals (i.e., 229) published only a single refereed paper in *IJARE*, at least within the first six volumes. This is far and away the norm for virtually all scholarly journals in the literature. Please note that this count is only for the peer reviewed papers and did not include other contributions such as editorials, scientific reviews, or aquatic media reviews. There were 70 additional individuals during the first six volumes who published two or more reviewed papers. As a result, *IJARE* published the work of 299 separate individuals in the first six volumes. In the 24 separate issues, that averages to almost exactly 12 unique individuals whose work was published in each single issue.

As you inspect Table 3, it becomes quickly evident that authorship of multiple papers becomes more and more infrequent as the number of published papers increases. You will note that three individuals each have been authors on 10 or more separate papers! That is simply a phenomenal number. Impressive as well are those 42 who have published two papers. In between, there are 25 scholars who were authors on between 3 and 9 separate scholarly papers. Perhaps we should work to reduce the number of pages contributed by the authors of multiple

**Table 3 The Number of Publications Authored (or Coauthored) by Individuals in the *International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education* (2007-2012)**

# Articles Published	# of Different Individuals
1	229
2	41
3	6
4	6
5	7
6	2
7	0
8	2
9	2
10	1
11	0
12	0
13	1
15	1

papers, but there are already so many different facts and figures floating around in our heads, we doubt whether readers could be more impressed, much less interested in more facts.

## Articles

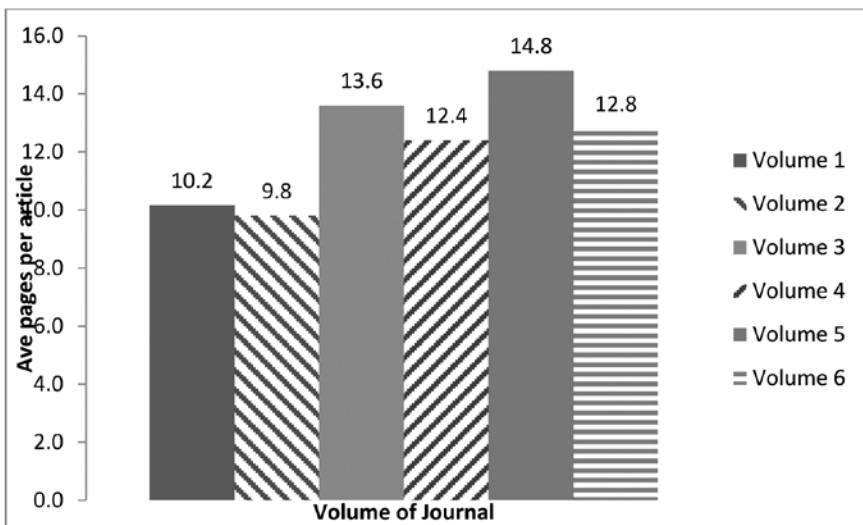
The final area that we sought to explore about the 168 peer-reviewed articles in *IJARE* related to the length of published papers. Paper length varied considerably with the shortest reviewed papers being only three pages in length. The longest paper was a whopping 41 pages (and frankly, it probably could and should have been shorter with fewer figures and tables and more concise writing). The Editorial Office often has gotten requests about the maximum page length of a manuscript. Up to this point we have resisted setting a maximum page length, but respond that most word processed manuscripts (double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-pt font, with one inch margins as prescribed by the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the *APA Publication Manual*) fall within the range of 15-22 pages (not including tables and figures). As you will note, this translates into an average length published manuscript of 12 pages long (with a median and mode both at 11 pages). One managing editor for *Human Kinetics* quoted me the figure that one journal print page is approximately equal to 440 words, although tables and figures extend journal page length somewhat. For example, this editorial totals about 2,750 words, so one might expect it to be at least six pages long. Given that there are three tables and four figures, however, it likely will run as long as eight or nine pages when published in print. Check it out and see if the estimate holds true to form when this is in print.

As we had with the number of authors per article, we wondered if the average length of our peer-reviewed papers has increased across the six volumes of the

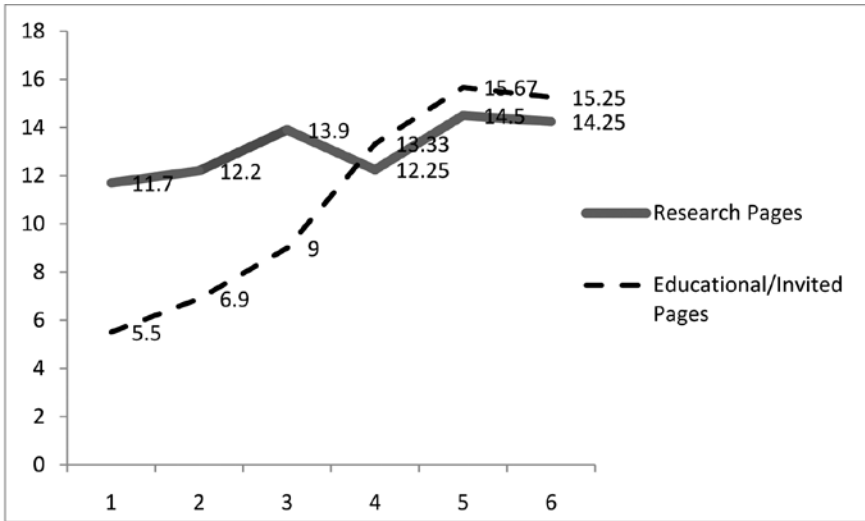


journal. Unlike our “hunch” that the number of authors per paper had increased, it was not at all clear from visual inspection alone whether paper length had increased, partially due to the relatively wide variability in paper length. Using a similar process to that used to calculate average authors per paper, we calculated average length of paper per volume and have displayed those results in Figure 3. In a pattern somewhat similar to the number of authors per paper, the length of papers has gradually increased from between 9 and 10 pages during the first two volumes to more consistently between 13 or 14 pages on average during Volumes 4, 5, and 6. A similar note of caution should be leveled toward the high average number of pages observed in Volume 5 due to one outlier paper that was 41 pages long.

Since *IJARE* publishes different kinds of peer-reviewed papers (i.e., research, educational, invited), we also wondered whether there was a difference between the average length of research vs. educational vs. invited papers. As with the previous question, we also were interested to see whether the length of those types of papers had changed over the six volumes. You can easily observe the fascinating answer yourself by examining Figure 4. As expected, research articles in Volumes 1-3 were almost twice as long as educational and invited articles. Then, something unexpected happened. Beginning with Volume 4, the length of the educational and invited papers suddenly exceeded the research papers in length. Of course, it is important to realize that in each volume, there were three to four times as many research papers published. With such a small sample of educational papers, it was much easier to skew the average upward with a single longer contribution. We take from this result, however, that the length as well as



**Figure 3** — Pages per peer-reviewed article by volume of *International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education* (2007-2012).



**Figure 4** — Comparison between average length of research papers and educational/invited papers across the six volumes of the *International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education* (2007-2012).

perhaps the quality of the educational papers has risen substantially over these first six volumes, while the research papers have increased only slightly in length. Our subjective opinion is that the higher standards employed by our reviewers has continued to improve the overall quality of the research papers as it has the educational papers.

Certainly, there are numerous other summaries, statistics, and observations we might make from the plethora of data we have compiled from the 168 peer-reviewed publications authored by 299 unique individuals presenting themselves 479 times during the first six volumes of *IJARE*. We could do even more if we expanded our search to include the special reports, position statements, and scientific reviews. We will be interested to receive any public comments or observations drawn from our summary. If it has helped provide a perspective on how the Journal is progressing over these six volumes and six years, then our piece has served its purpose. Thanks for taking the time to read and reflect.