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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14615517.2014.992671>

Morrison-Saunders, A. and Retief, F. (2015) Editorial: Reflections of the outgoing editors. *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal*, 33 (1). pp. 1-3.

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Reflections of the outgoing editors

As the outgoing Editors of *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal* (IAPA), we would like to take this opportunity to provide some reflections from our experience in the role over the past six years. We thought it would be interesting to share some of the characteristics of the authors and reviewers we have interacted with and some thoughts for aspiring IAPA authors on how to maximise the chances of having a manuscript accepted for publication. We end with some thanks to those who have helped us.

Firstly though we wholeheartedly welcome Riki Therivel into the role. We wish her every success as the new Editor of IAPA and hope that she enjoys the experience as much as we have. We imagine that Riki will be known to many readers of IAPA already, especially for her leading international work in strategic environmental assessment and valuable insights into the sustainability appraisal process in England. Riki has been responsible for all new submissions to the journal since the beginning of September 2014. There is however an understandable lag between receiving new manuscript submissions and actual publication of the resulting papers. As such, this is the final issue of IAPA for which we have been fully responsible in the Editor role for all the papers that appear in it. As can be seen from this issue, the journal continues to attract a diversity of high quality submissions from around the world. It is to these characteristics of our authors and our reviewers that we now turn our attention.

During our tenure as Editors we received over 270 manuscript submissions to IAPA, of which over 130 papers have subsequently been published in the journal. These figures do not include Special Issue papers handled by guest editors, although on occasion we provided some reviews, advice or decisions on special issue submissions too. In round figures there were more than 420 authors associated with the total manuscript submissions we received representing 60 countries of the world. Figure 1 illustrates the relative number of authors per country and it demonstrates that IAPA is truly an international journal. We also engaged with some 370 reviewers from 32 countries. A comparison of the frequency of author and reviewer activity is depicted in Table 1 in which we have attempted to account for the nationality of each author (including co-authors) and reviewer alike.

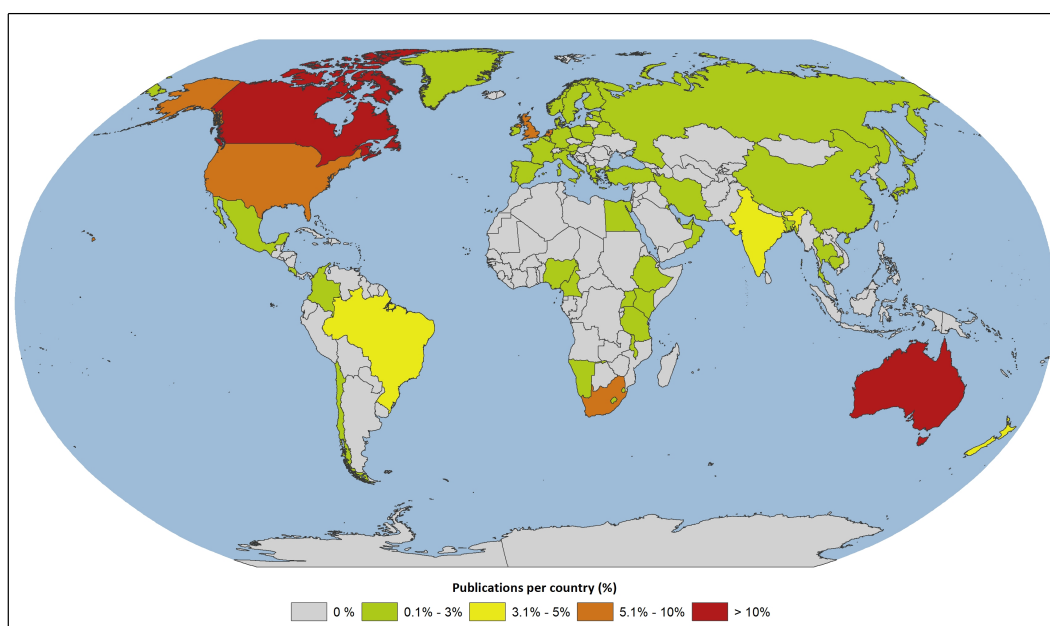


Figure 1: Frequency and distribution of authors for manuscripts submitted to IAPA 2009–2014.

Although this may come as somewhat of a surprise, the Editor process is not an exact science and the numbers depicted in the table are indicative, rather than absolute (and further, the percentages have been rounded to nearest whole number). The main reason for this is that the nationality and country of residence and/or affiliation of authors and reviewers might differ. In our analysis we have tried to capture the nationality rather than residence and/or affiliation because this provides to our view a better reflection of the international profile of the journal. Other factors that complicate the analysis are the combination of authors for certain papers as well as the iterative nature of the review process which sometimes lead to more than one round of review.

Data disclaimers aside, there are some interesting points to be realised from Figure 1 and Table 1. It is clear that English speaking countries dominate which is perhaps to be expected, but this highlights an ongoing challenge to encourage and enable people from non-English countries to successfully publish in the journal. This is important for progressing impact assessment because of the extensive and growing practice in these countries. In this regard maybe lessons could also be learned from non-English speaking European countries that currently feature in Table 1 such as the Netherlands, Portugal and Italy. The authorships from these countries are possibly due to established International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) affiliates and general involvement with the organisation. It is also noticeable for example that these countries have all hosted an international IAIA conference in recent years. Overall the membership profile of IAIA (<http://www.iaia.org/membership/>) is drawn from over 120 countries which includes increasing representation from regions like South America and Asia. Herein lies an obvious opportunity to further grow the IAPA authorship, especially since there seems to be some correlation between the membership numbers by region and the author frequency of corresponding countries such as Australia, United Kingdom and Canada.

Table 1 shows that the top five ranking countries are the same for both author and reviewer frequency (Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, South Africa and The Netherlands) and others appear nearby to these in both lists (e.g. USA, New Zealand and Italy). This perhaps reflects our tendency to try and ensure that at least one reviewer comes from the same country of origin as an author, especially for papers with country specific content. Our experience with IAPA is also that in general people seem more willing to review for a journal in which they also publish. So if the authorship of IAPA papers is expanded, the pool of reviewers could similarly grow at the same time. We also found that members of IAIA and those that actively publish in IAPA were easier to secure as reviewers relative to others. In terms of the number of reviews versus number of authors, South Africa in particular stands out (Australia and United Kingdom next highest) which perhaps reflects our own country bias with respect to the networks we have been able to call upon when seeking reviewers. We wonder also whether authors might be influenced in choice of journal to submit their manuscripts based on our countries of origin (e.g. South Africa and other nearby African nations are quite prominent). It will be interesting to know whether the country characteristics will significantly change in the future under the new Editorship.

Table 1 Comparison of the frequency of IAPA authors and reviewers by nationality (May 2009 - August 2014)

Author Country	% n=423	Reviewer Country	% n=369
Australia; Canada	13	Australia	25
United Kingdom	8	Canada; United Kingdom	16
South Africa; The Netherlands; United States of America	5	South Africa	12
Brazil; New Zealand	4	The Netherlands	9
India; Italy	3	Portugal	3
Bangladesh; Denmark; Iran; Nigeria; Portugal; Spain	2	Iran; Italy; New Zealand; United States of America	2
Colombia; Finland; Germany; Greece; Ireland; Mexico; Norway; South Korea; Sweden; Thailand	1	Brazil; Cambodia; Finland; Sweden	1
Abu Dhabi; Albania; Austria; Bahrain; Belarus; Belgium; Cambodia; Cameroon; Chile; China; Costa Rica; Egypt; Estonia; Ethiopia; France; Greenland; Japan; Kenya; Kuwait; Latvia; Lesotho; Macedonia; Malawi; Malta; Namibia; Oman; Poland; Qatar Russia; Slovakia; Slovenia; Swaziland; Tanzania; Turkey; Uganda	<1	Austria; Bangladesh; Belarus; Belgium; Cameroon; China; Costa Rica; Denmark; Egypt; Estonia; France; Germany; Ireland; Macedonia; Mexico; Namibia; Norway; South Korea	<1

One of the IAPA Editor functions is to participate in the 'Meet the Editors' session held at each annual conference of IAIA. Apart from explaining the steps in the peer review and publication process, discussing the Editor's role in a public forum like this is valuable for distilling what we consider to be key points for writers that will enhance the chances of having a manuscript accepted for publication. It has also inspired us to conduct journal paper writing workshops in the universities in which we work or visit, and we believe it has also enhanced our own research and writing endeavours. If we were asked to nominate the three most important requirements of a good paper (which we continually promoted during our time as editors), it would be as follows:

- provide a clear and succinct aim for the paper/research that is prominently placed and which explicitly links to the title of the paper, (i.e. because the title is the thing that entices an interested reader to a paper in the first instance);
- provide a clear justification for the methodology used to meet the stated aim (i.e. backed up with appropriate references) and not just a descriptive account of what was done; and
- end with a clear message of interest to the international readership of IAPA journal, (i.e. not just a case study or country specific finding), as this will increase the education value and citation potential of the work. We feel so strongly about this that we included it as a specific criterion in the IAPA notes for authors and reviewers.

In our first editorial (March 2010) we indicated that we wished to serve and uphold IAPA as it already was. For example, for us, a key strength of IAPA that distinguishes it from other impact assessment journals are the Professional Practice Papers (PPPs) which provide a voice for practitioners in the international literature as well as an avenue for researchers with comparatively small or specific case study examples to be able to publish their findings for all to share. We have actively promoted and continued the tradition of having PPPs appear in the journal along with other innovative short works such as the Roundtable format (e.g. March 2014 issue). Overall we have sought to deliver upon the core mission we articulated back then ('maintaining the quality and status of IAPA as probably the most widely circulated and read

international impact assessment journal') through working actively and closely with our authors and reviewers alike to encourage the highest quality research and writing attainable in the circumstance. We have thoroughly enjoyed the experience, especially the opportunity to work with a great range of impact assessment researchers and professionals.

In closing we would like to thank the people who have supported us. Firstly a journal like IAPA cannot exist without committed authors and reviewers. There is obviously a lot of work involved in both roles, and they are carried out voluntarily. Secondly we would like to thank the IAPA Editorial Board, especially those members who served as advocates for the journal through authoring and reviewing papers for the journal during our tenure. In the interests of upholding the double-blind nature of the publishing process, we are unable to name names here, but there are a handful of individuals to whom we are especially grateful who graciously reviewed manuscripts for us on multiple occasions and sometimes at short notice. You know who you are, but we salute you because you were essential to us being able to fulfill the editor role! Finally we greatly appreciate the friendly and efficient work of the publisher staff in enabling a seamless transition of material from our editor role into production for publication.

The good news for us is that with this editorial we are not saying goodbye to IAPA; we look forward to continue our involvement as authors and reviewers. IAPA will continue to be our number one journal of choice to communicate our research to the impact assessment community.

Over and out...

Angus Morrison-Saunders and Francois Retief

[Angus Morrison-Saunders & Francois Retief (2015) Reflections of the outgoing editors, *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal*, 33:1, 1-3, DOI: [10.1080/14615517.2014.992671](https://doi.org/10.1080/14615517.2014.992671)]