

Today's Challenge for Academic Publication

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Dear Readers,

Change in the world of academic publications is no less dramatic than in the “real” world of the economy. This seems to be true especially in our part of the world, the applied sciences of management, engineering, economics, operations research, and logistics—except: the direction is different! While the challenge to many “real world” businesses and to policy and decision makers of the recent years has been to cope with a precipitous decline in demand, production, and financial supplies in many industries, we see and foresee an equally dramatic rise in the demand for opportunities to publish academic work.

The observations that I make in our German-language and broader European academic community suggest that the pressures to “publish or perish” are increasing now far beyond the levels of the past. More precisely, it is now “publish in A- and B-ranked journals...or else!” for academics working on their careers and reputation.

Some reasons are obvious:

- Where there are respected and accepted national journals in their respective languages (other than English), these are declining in importance. Papers of whatever quality, which are published there, are rapidly losing their value on resumes and publications lists.
- The competition between universities for positions of excellence has become as global as the competition between international corporations in markets in the automotive and electronics industries, and elsewhere.

The primary, if not the exclusive yardstick by which excellence is measured is their output in highly ranked journals.

- Last but not least: the practice of writing dissertations and habilitation research is rapidly shifting from the traditional monograph-type, book-length piece of research to “cumulative” dissertations and habilitation volumes, where three, four, or more refereed journal publications are bound together. Some estimates that I have—just from the German “demand” for A and B journal publications—suggest that in the next few years an additional 40 to 60 aspiring Ph.D. students in the field of logistics and supply chain management will want to place their three or more papers in A and B journals per annum to substitute what used to be monograph dissertations. And that is just Germany, accounting for less than a quarter of the European logistics community!

What does this mean? There will be much tighter competition for getting papers accepted in those journals that already have established good rankings. There will be longer and longer waiting periods for accepted work to be printed. And there is need for more outlets that can publish excellent academic work and that gain A and B acceptance in the rankings.

For a new international journal like our Logistics Research, overall, that sounds like good news. We have and will have a rising supply of submissions (and we welcome them!). But this development also poses significant challenges to us, the editors of the journal, to the institutions that put out journal rankings, and to the broader academic community that supplies the judgement calls.

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We must make sure that the increased flow of manuscript submissions—more often from less experienced young researchers than in the past—does not result in lowering standards of the publication. We must succeed in finding and maintaining a growing number of experienced and dedicated reviewers to the cumbersome task of supporting authors in the publication process. And we have to manage the review process speedily and well.

But the institutions and peers that do the journal rankings must also cooperate: A traditionally multi-year process of noticing and evaluating new journals must become more reactive to a rapidly changing and growing world of publication platforms. And the questions of what makes academic contributions to an applied, interdisciplinary science like Logistics “excellent” today—and tomorrow—must be considered and reconsidered continuously, as the real world changes, which we are expected to help.

We want Logistics Research to make a contribution towards meeting these challenges, and we ask you, our readers and authors, to help us do this better with every issue!

The second issue, which you hold in your hands, starts with a somewhat provocative article by Bretzke on the aspirations and limitations of the concept of supply chain management, which has been receiving so much attention

in recent years. Bretzke is suggesting that we may not have been critical enough. We invite your comments and criticisms about his argument to start a discussion about this important issue.

The second paper by Halldorsson, Kotzab, and Skjoett-Larsen addresses another of the “top” subjects of our time in a similar fashion. They ask whether the effects of supply chain management’s growing acceptance are a blessing or a curse.

Obermeier’s paper is a rare study that provides and analyzes data on changes in inventory levels—as one of the key output variables that should be positively affected by the growing sophistication of logistics.

And finally, Jeschonowski, Schmitz, Wallenburg, and Weber provide a broad and deep review of the evolution and advances in the field of controlling and control systems in logistics.

I hope you will enjoy and benefit from studying Logistics Research!



Peter Klaus, Editor-in-Chief
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