

# DEMOGRAPHY

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DATE: April 16, 2014  
TO: PAA Committee on Publications and Board of Directors  
FROM: Pamela Smock, Editor  
RE: Spring 2014 Report on *Demography*

*Demography's* editorial operations moved to the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor on May 1, 2013. I serve as Lead Editor. The current editorial team also includes 16 Deputy Editors: 11 are located at the University of Michigan, one recently departed Michigan, and four are “outside” editors. In addition, we have an excellent Editorial Board composed of roughly 60 population scientists who assist in the review process (please see: <http://www.springer.com/social+sciences/population+studies/journal/13524?detailsPage=editorialBoard> for a complete list).

The day-to-day operations of *Demography* are more than ably executed by Sara Zobl, a student who will begin the Sociology PhD program here at the University of Michigan in the Fall of 2014 with a concentration in Demography. Laura Tesch continues to serve as our extremely effective Managing Editor, and has maintained her focus on moving accepted papers from copy editing to proofreading to online publication and then on to print publication as quickly as possible. She oversees the team of freelancers who process manuscripts: Teresa Artman continues to copy edit most of the articles, with Andrew Hollandbeck editing as needed, and Laura reviews all edited manuscripts before the proofs are sent to the authors. This process ensures the greatest efficiency in moving the best quality papers to typesetting. Bethany Curtis handles the bulk of the proofreading, and Christy Pogue and Laura proofread as needed.

## **Manuscripts Processed**

Following the convention of past reports, I present summary numbers generated by Editorial Express (EE); these are drawn from what are termed *stock and flow reports*. *Demography* has relied on EE for its online submission and manuscript management system for several years.

Table 1 provides information on manuscripts processed between September 1, 2013 and March 31, 2014. I begin with September 1, 2013 because the Fall 2013 *Demography* report to the PAA Board of Directors provided data through August 31, 2013.

**Table 1. Manuscripts Processed: September 1, 2013 - March 31, 2014**

Submissions pending, September 1, 2013	126
Inflows to pending status between September 1, 2013 and March 31, 2013	
New submissions	248
Resubmissions	96
Less: outflows from pending status between March 1, 2013 and August 31, 2013	
Submissions which were Accepted	44
Submissions which were Conditionally Accepted	26
Submissions which were Summarily Rejected (no referees consulted)	60
Submissions which were Rejected	145
Submissions which were Withdrawn	1
Submissions which were Returned for Revision	79
Submissions which were Not Elsewhere Classified	0
Submissions pending March 31, 2014	114

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The first line shows that on September 1, 2013 there were 126 manuscripts pending. This category includes papers at any stage of the review process following a submission or resubmission but prior to a decision. The table also shows that over this 7-month period, 354 decisions were made ( $44+26+60+145+79=354$ ).

The bulk of the time spent in pending status stems from the duration a manuscript is out for review. Some of this time also consists of the period between a manuscript's being "checked in" from the holding tank and assignment to a Deputy Editor, and between assignment and the Deputy Editor's submission of reviewer suggestions to the Editorial Assistant. At the other end of the process, pending status includes the typically short periods between the point when all reviews are in but the Deputy Editor has not yet uploaded an advisory letter, and between the time the Deputy Editor has done so and I make the final decision and write the decision letter.<sup>1</sup>

Turning to the number of submissions, between September 1, 2013 and March 31, 2014 there were a total of 344 submissions: 248 new submissions and 96 resubmissions. These numbers are higher than that for the same time interval one year ago (9/1/12-3/31/13). For that period, there were a total of 307 submissions, 235 new and 72 resubmissions (not in table). This translates into a 12% increase over a year's time.

Table 2 and Figure 1 show the total number of new submissions by year. Figure 1 shows the number of submissions per year between 2004 and 2013. As I wrote in the Fall report, "[i]t appears to us that the

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<sup>1</sup> I attempt to write decisions letters within a week of a Deputy Editor uploading his/her advisory note to me.

increase is considerable, and it appears likely that over 400 new submissions per year will be the ‘new normal’.” This is borne out by the data which indicate 423 new submissions for the 2013 calendar year.

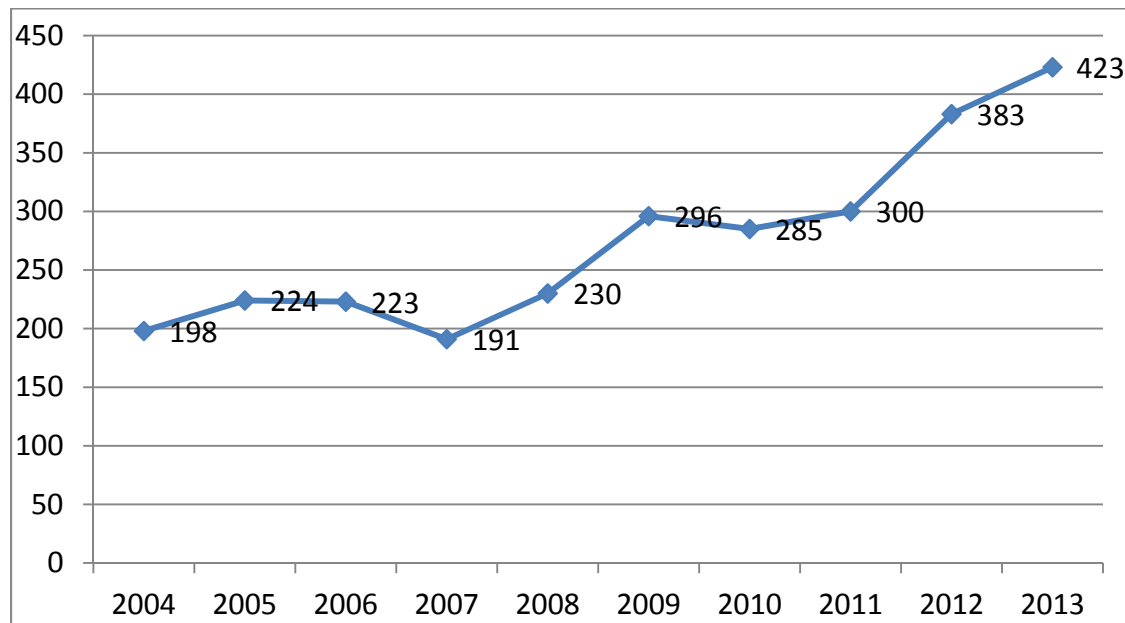
**Table 2. Total Number of New Submissions to *Demography* by Calendar Year, 2004-2013**

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NUMBER OF NEW SUBMISSIONS</u>
2004	198
2005	224
2006	223
2007	191
2008	230
2009	296
2010	285
2011	300
2012	383
2013	423
2014	102*

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\*January 1, 2014 through March 31, 2014

**Figure 1. Annual Number of New Submissions to *Demography* 2004-2013**



## Acceptance Rates

Past reports have estimated acceptance rates from the Editorial Express stock and flow information reported in Table 1 and I follow that precedent. One type of estimate is based on the number of *Accept* decisions in the numerator and the total number of decisions made in the denominator. The latter is  $44+26+60+145+79=354$ . Thus, the acceptance rate is  $44/354 = .123$ . If *Conditional Accept* decisions are also included, then the acceptance rate increases to 20%. ( $[44+26]/354 = .197$ ). Roughly 41% were rejected with the input of external reviewers, 17% were summarily rejected (i.e., desk rejects), and 22% received invitations to revise and resubmit.

These acceptance rates are slightly higher than those reported in the 2013 Spring Report to the Board. In that report, the acceptance rate was .106. With the inclusion of conditional accepts the acceptance rate rose to .167.<sup>2</sup>

However, because the numerator and denominator do not correspond, the above rates are not ideal. I thus use a measure that gauges the chance that a manuscript will eventually be accepted; this is a *cohort approach* and involves tracking decisions about manuscripts initially submitted during a particular year: what I term a *submission cohort*. A downside to the cohort approach is that it is right-censored because insufficient time has elapsed to know the final editorial outcomes for manuscripts that were submitted more recently.

Table 3 shows the cohort acceptance rates of manuscripts submitted from 2004 through 2013. For manuscripts submitted from 2004 through 2012 (i.e., those we can assume have had at least a first decision), *Demography* experienced some variation in acceptance rates. The lowest acceptance rate occurred in 2011 (17%) and 2007 had the highest acceptance rate (31%).

**Table 3. Editorial Outcomes for Manuscripts Submitted to Demography, 2004– 2014**

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014*
Accepted**	29%	22%	23%	31%	25%	25%	22%	17%	21%	7%	0%
Conditionally Accepted	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0%	.3%	.5%	1%	0%
Returned for Revision	4%	2%	2%	4%	3%	0%	0%	3%	2.9%	12%	6%
Pending	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	.26%	8%	70%
Rejected	62%	71%	65%	62%	64%	59%	56%	58%	50%	53%	4%
Summarily Rejected	5%	5%	11%	4%	6%	15%	20%	22%	26%	20%	20%
N	197	223	221	192	232	296	272	297	376	421	101

\*The 2014 column includes manuscripts submitted between January 1, 2014 and March 31, 2014.

\*\*Prior to 2010, the “accept” category includes conditional acceptances.

Note: There are small differences between Tables 2 and 3 in total number of new submissions per year. These are due to the withdrawal of manuscripts in some years.

<sup>2</sup> The period used in the Spring 2013 report was 9/1/2012 to 2/28/13.

The acceptance rate for manuscripts submitted in 2012 stands at 21% and at 7% for manuscripts submitted in 2013. The latter will rise considerably because many of those manuscripts are still in process. The acceptance rate for the first three months of 2014 is now zero, again a percentage that will most certainly rise. The majority (70%) of manuscripts submitted in 2014 are currently pending with most still under review. Thus, the 2013 and particularly the 2014 percentages should be interpreted with caution and are not indicative of final outcomes. This is also the case, although to a much lesser extent, for 2012. We are still working with some manuscripts from 2012 that are in the revise and resubmit stage; many of these are likely to be accepted.

### **Manuscript Review Time**

We continue to try to move manuscripts along quickly. This is sometimes difficult. Not only do we face increasing numbers of manuscripts, but many reviewers are late and some simply nonresponsive.

However, the data thus far suggests we are meeting that goal of a relatively rapid turnaround time. Our Fall report indicated that the median duration from submission to a first decision was 76 days during the first two and a half of months of the change in editorship.

Using a cohort approach, we find that we are under the 90 day mark that served as the prior Editor's benchmark. In the six month period between January 1, 2013 and June 30, 2013 (a time that encompasses the current and past editorship), the median time to first decision was 78 days. From July 1, 2013 to December 31, 2013, our median was 83 days to a first decision. We will continue to monitor our review time to ensure an average of roughly three months to a first decision.

### **Lag from Acceptance to Publication**

As of March 31, 2014, 42 accepted papers were in the publication queue. Of those, 10 have already been published online; 5 are in the final stages of page proof corrections and nearing publication; 9 are with Springer for typesetting; 10 are in copy-editing; and 8 await processing and will enter copy-editing within the next 3 weeks or so (i.e., during month of April). Notably, those assigned to the April 2014 issue and the June 2014 papers that are already in final form (10 of 18) have already been published online.

It needs to be underscored that these numbers also reflect the turnaround time of *authors* at both the copy-editing and page proof stages, and Springer's turnaround time preparing page proofs. Thus, Laura Tesch and I agree that date of acceptance should not be the only starting point for calculating lag time to publication: authors are sometimes required to submit minor changes and/or additions after the date of final acceptance, and some authors are much less speedy than others in submitting their final version.

The result is that the acceptance date can differ greatly from the final submission date. To illustrate, consider one of our papers to be published in the June 2014 issue: there was a six-month lag between the acceptance date and the final submission date. Therefore, a more accurate starting date for examining lag time to publication would be the final document date; this marks the time when we can begin preparing the paper for publication.

Consider two measures of the “accept” date. Accept 1= the first acceptance date and Accept 2= the date that Laura has the final manuscript files. (The numbers that follow use data from last Spring to the present). Comparing the two measures leads to the following lag times:

Accept 1 to online publication: 6 months  
Accept 2 to online publication: 4-5 months  
Accept 1 to print publication: 8 months  
Accept 2 to print publication: 7 months

This is good news and shows progress. In his Spring 2013 memo, Stew Tolnay reported a lag from acceptance to print publication of 12 months.

Moreover, we believe we may be able to do even better. With the increasing delegation of tasks to Bethany Curtis, Laura will be able to achieve an even shorter turnaround time, barring any substantial increase in the number of accepted manuscripts. Laura is also in discussions with Springer as to how to reduce typesetting time.

### **Closing Remarks**

Editorial activities are running smoothly. Moreover, we are looking forward to a further decrease in the lag between acceptance and publication. Nonetheless, there is an issue that bears repeating; it concerns obtaining reliable reviewers. In particular, the problem is with those who never reply (e.g., decline, accept) as well as those who agree to review but never do, even after several reminders. Especially in a time of increasing submissions, we need an increasing pool of committed reviewers.

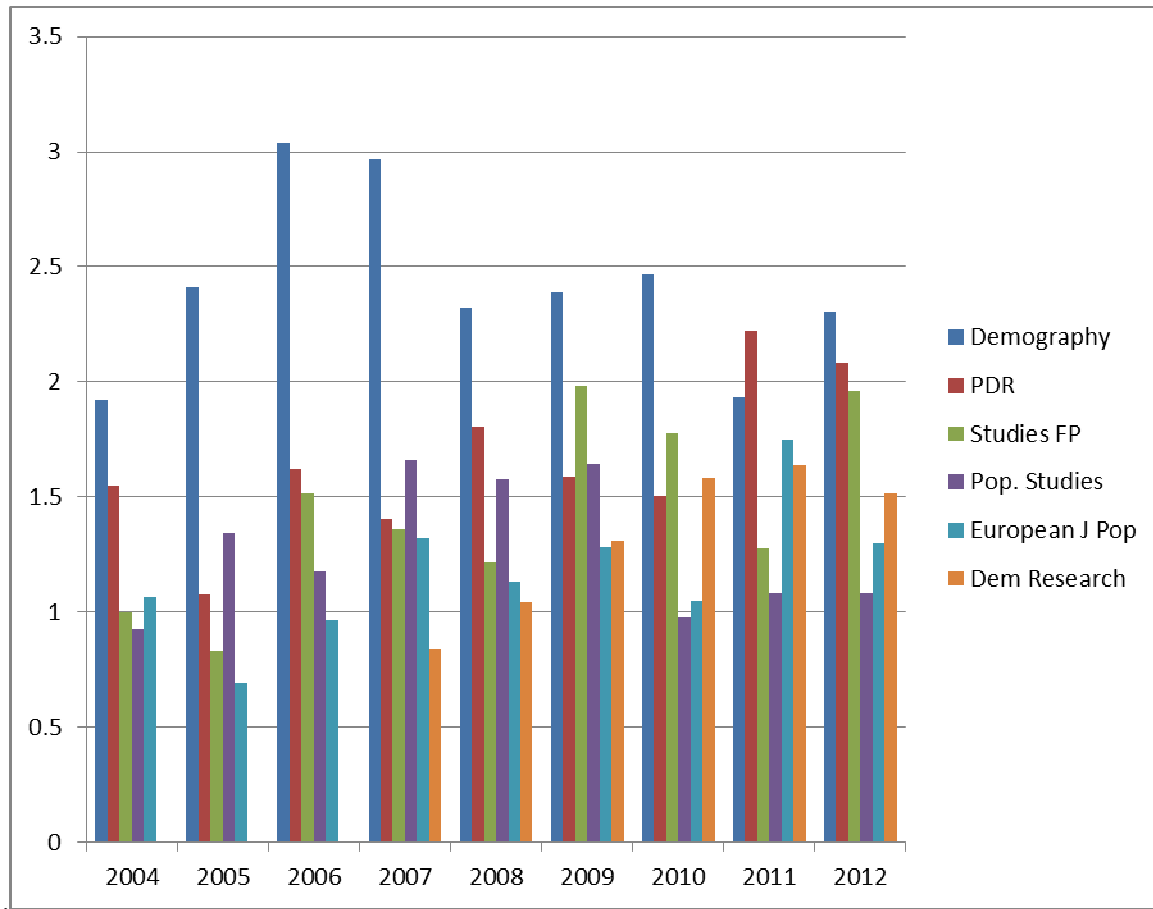
I also have a comment on a concern raised at the editorial breakfast last year. The matter was *Demography*'s impact factor.<sup>3</sup> At this time last year, the most recent data (2011) suggested that another demography journal had a higher impact factor than *Demography* (although we led in the five-year impact factor). Now, the most recent data (2012) show that we have regained our lead (see Appendix Figures 1 and 2). While our focus in the editorial process is on quality and rigorous peer review, it is helpful to know that a metric of *Demography*'s influence is in line with its high quality standards.

Last, but far from least, I continue to be grateful to all the other participants in this endeavor. These include a terrific group of Deputy Editors, the Editorial Board, the Publications Committee, Managing Editor Laura Tesch, Editorial Assistant Sara Zobl, Evelien Bakker of Springer, and the many insightful and responsive reviewers in our community.

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<sup>3</sup> The Impact factor is published yearly by Thomson Reuters. It is useful way of comparing the citability of journals, particularly if the type of journals being compared is similar; the absolute value of the Impact Factor is not useful in isolation. The Impact Factor measures the number of times an average paper in a particular journal has been referenced. It is calculated as follows: the Impact Factor of Journal *Y* in calendar year *X* is the number of citations received by *Y* to any item published in Journal in the prior two years (*X*-1) or (*X*-2). This number is then divided by the total number of items (e.g., articles) published in those two preceding years. The five-year impact factor counts citations in a given year to the previous five years and divided by the number of items published in the previous five years.

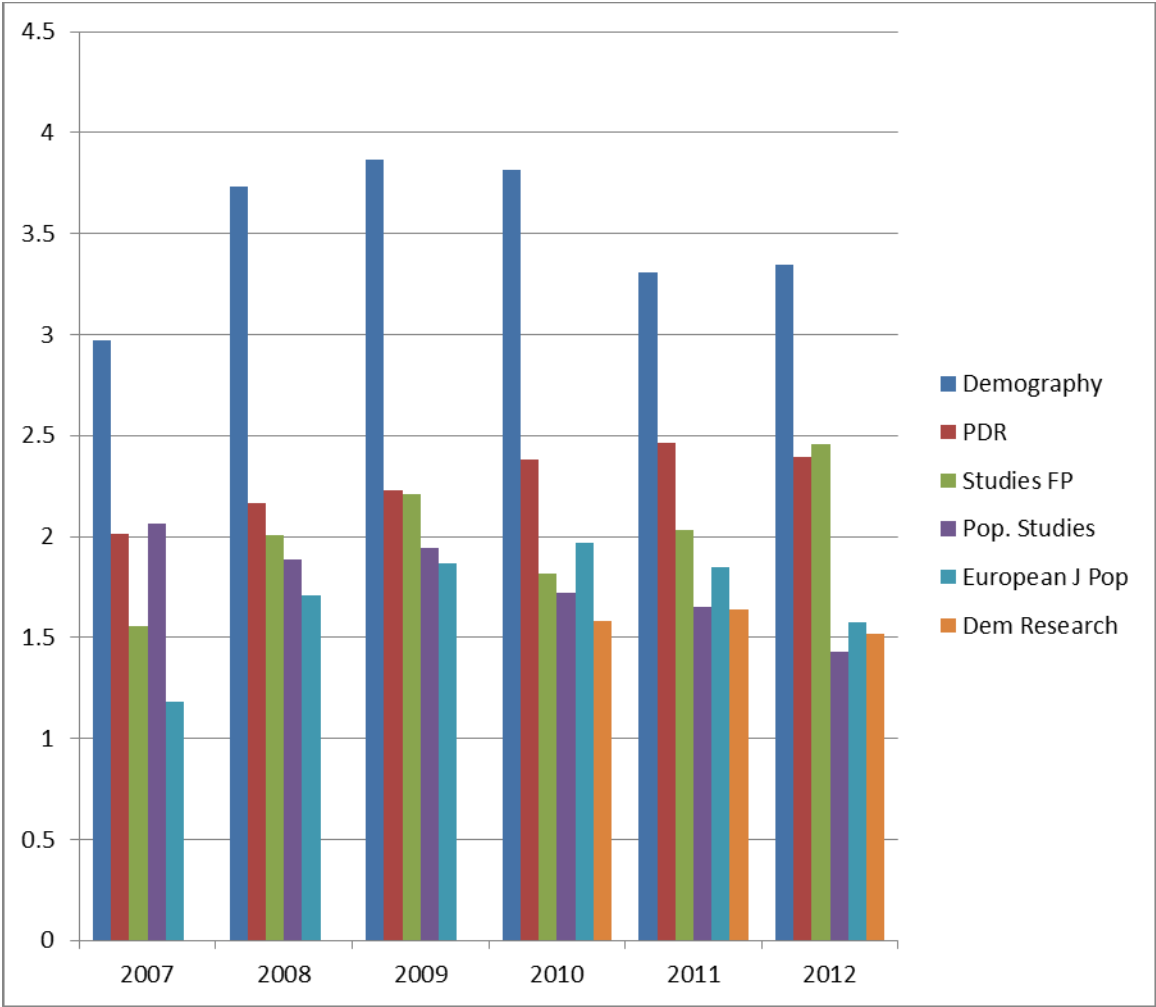
Appendix Figure 1: Impact factor scores by year, selected demography journals



Notes: Data were accessed on 4/13/14 from <http://admin-apps.webofknowledge.com/JCR/JCR?wsid=4CZm5U7UNdxLJEnlKXB&ssid=&SID=4CZm5U7UNdxLJEnlKXB>. The journals selected for contrast include other general demography journals and *Studies in Family Planning*. The latter was selected for its strong relative record in terms of impact factor over the years.

*Demography* has the highest factor score in 2012 of all demography journals except for an unusually high score for *Population and Environment* in 2012 (not in figure). However, the 5-year impact factor for *Population and Environment* in 2012 is 2.143, substantially lower than that for *Demography* (3.346).

Appendix Figure 2: 5-Year impact factor scores, selected demography journals



Note: *Demography* has the highest 5-year impact factor of all demography journals, not only the ones represented in chart