

Journal Status Report

Simply stated, the immediate goal of scientific research is to publish in a peer-reviewed journal that is widely read by the scientific community. Publication is deemed sufficient to indicate that the reported research finding is original, novel, and significant to improve the accuracy of human understanding of the natural world. It would also establish the names of those who deserve full credit for the discovery of a physical phenomenon or the development of a scientific theory or technique. To funding agencies, the publication of results would strongly suggest grant money that is well-spent on a research endeavor that is envisioned to eventually boost labor productivity and enhance the quality of life.

The number of peer-reviewed journals that is published regularly in various parts of the world is large. Scopus (scopus.com) – a bibliographic database owned by Elsevier – tracks the abstracts and citations of articles in twenty thousand English-language journals in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics as well as in the arts and humanities. The Web of Science (clarivate.com) – produced by Clarivate Analytics – monitors the abstracts and citations of articles in over 12,000 journals and 160,000 conference proceedings.

The Philippine Journal of Science (philjournalsci.dost.gov.ph) is a multidisciplinary journal that is published by the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) through the Science and Technology Information Institute (STII). Its maiden issue appeared more than a hundred years ago in 1906. The Journal serve a number of functions that are vital to the continued development of the Philippine science community. Its Editorial Office is located in the DOST Complex and most members of its Editorial Board, including the Editor-in-Chief, are Philippine-based scientists and academicians. The ability of the Journal to attract high quality manuscript submissions and to publish in a timely manner those that have passed its rigid yet fair peer-review process is a gauge of the academic reputation of its Editorial Board and the technical expertise of its Editorial Office to handle sensitive scientific information.

The Journal publishes worthy research results in all areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics including economics and the social sciences. It came out with a total of 210 peer-reviewed articles (26.25 per year) from 2009 (Volume 138) to 2016 (Volume 145). The corresponding authors in 74.68% of the 466 submissions (4.85 per month) that were received in the said eight-year period were based in the country. The authorship trend continued in the first eight months of 2017 with 76.74% of the 86 submissions (10.8 ± 2.4 per month) featuring local corresponding authors.

More than half (53.16%) of the 79 submissions (6.5 ± 3.2 per month) in 2016 were in Agriculture and Forestry (27.85%), Biological Sciences (17.72%) and Chemical Sciences (7.6%). Together, the three areas – Agriculture and Forestry (25.26%), Biological Sciences (18.61%), and Chemical Sciences (15.12%) – also account for 60% of the first 86 submissions in 2017.

Decisions regarding manuscript acceptance or non-acceptance were communicated in fifty-two (65.82%) of the 79 submissions in 2016 within 7.42 ± 2.98 months after receipt by the Editorial Office. A total of 40 articles appeared in 2016 – the year when the number of issues was first increased from two (June and December) to four (March, June, September, and December). In 2017, editorial decision-making was completed within 4.1 ± 1.53 months – a 45% reduction relative to that in 2016 – for the first 32 submissions that were fully processed.

The increase in the number of submissions received per month, the shorter decision times, and immediate listing of accepted articles – together with the timely uploading of issues in the Journal website – are palpable improvements that were made possible by the adoption of operational changes in the Editorial Office, the earnest financial and logistical support of the STII and the DOST, and the generosity of referees who provided prompt and constructive criticisms that were invaluable to authors especially those who are starting to pursue independent research work or to supervise the dissertation research of PhD students.

To achieve timely dissemination of important research findings given the growing number of submissions, the Journal has increased to fifteen (15) the number of peer-reviewed articles appearing in the September 2017 issue. The forthcoming December 2017 issue is going to feature at least the same number of articles. While deemed a welcome development, the increase in publication throughput is also posing new operational and budgetary challenges to the Editorial Office and the Publisher that will now have to proofread more accepted articles within narrower production

timelines and to source additional funds for covering the rising cost of producing thicker printed versions of the Journal issues. At present, successful authors do not pay page charges and are not subjected to page-length limitation for their articles.

This Journal aspires to provide a coherent picture of the present state of scientific research in the country – a strategic objective that no other journal abroad would likely consider including in its rationale. It also aims to continue creating more opportunities for young Filipino scientists to serve as referees thereby enabling them to read critically and review constructively scientific works of colleagues – a valuable experience that fosters and strengthens the practice of self-regulation and correct ethical conduct among members of the domestic scientific community.

The timely publication of more high quality articles is key towards increasing the citation intensity of the Journal articles, which has been low historically. An improving citation track record will motivate prospective contributors – especially from underrepresented areas like physics, engineering, and the social sciences – to count this Journal as a priority destination for their publishable results. The Editorial Office will inevitably need to acquire better technologies that enhance author experience and encourage referees to submit their comments early thereby allowing the Editorial Office to render decisions more quickly to the benefit of all stakeholders. Access to a more user-friendly manuscript submission and tracking system is bound to bring tangible improvements in the efficiency of the peer-review process, proof production, and journal content dissemination.

The Philippine scientific enterprise system is facing existential challenges specifically its continuing inability to produce more PhD graduates and to develop more Filipino scientists who are capable of leading high-impact research endeavors, especially those that engage foreign-based collaborators. This Journal will double its efforts to help overcome the aforementioned challenges not only by providing publication space to Filipino scientists and researchers, but also by creating opportunities for them to build a just community that celebrates scientific excellence and polices itself against detrimental research practices, including gratuitous use of public funds and rent-seeking.

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