

Journal Status Report 2019

This particular issue of Volume 148 presents a yearly status report in line with a practice that was started three years ago in 2017. The aim is to provide our valued readers and stakeholders with timely information that allows them to gauge correctly the current state of affairs of the Philippine Journal of Science (PJS) and to make them aware of the challenges that it is facing moving forward. The report is our tangible contribution in the ongoing effort to foster a culture of evidence-based decision-making in the Philippine scientific enterprise system—which includes the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), National Academy of Science and Technology, and the higher education institutions that offer STEM Ph.D. programs. Palpable scientific culture is more likely to take root in a society when its science community is the one showing the way by example. Metric-dependent planning, coupled with data-driven implementation, is essential in cultivating a nurturing research and development (R&D) environment that enables scientific talent to realize their full potential.

More manuscript submissions in 2019. The PJS editorial office received a total of one-hundred and twelve submissions (112) in the first six months of 2019—representing an average monthly submission rate of 18.7 ± 13 . The double-digit increase of 95% relative to that in the previous year may be attributed to the influx of submissions meant for publication in two additional special issues on genomics and nuclear science and technology in the Philippines. The average monthly rates in 2018 and 2017 were fairly stable at 9.6 ± 3.2 and 9.4 ± 3.6 , respectively. The figures indicate a marked improvement relative to 2015 when the rate was only 5 ± 1.5 submissions received per month.

Submissions by discipline. The top three manuscript contributors emanate from Biology (41 or 36.6%), Agriculture & Forestry (24 or 21.4%), and Earth & Environmental Sciences (17 or 15.2%). In 2018, a total of 115 were submitted with the following disciplines accounting for about 64% of the total: Agriculture & Forestry (31 or 27%); Nutrition, Food Science & Technology (25 or 21.7%); and Biology (17 or 14.8%). In 2015, there were 60 submissions with the following disciplinary distributions: Biology and Mathematics, Computer Science & Statistics accounting for 17 (or 28.3%) and 10 (or 16.7%), respectively—with Chemistry and Engineering at 6 (or 10%) each. The data mirror the relative temporal productivity and human-resource capability of the different sectors in the domestic R&D scene.

Affiliations of corresponding authors and collaborations. More than ninety percent (94.6%) of corresponding authors in the period of reckoning in 2019 are based in the country. The number is significantly higher than it was (76.5%) in the previous year. In 2015, only 67% of the 60 corresponding authors had local affiliations. In addition, 42.9% of 2019 submissions featured authors from two or more different institutions. In 2015 and 2016, the figures were 25% and 33.3%, respectively. The figures reveal a growing tendency among Filipino scientists and researchers to collaborate and share each others' best research practices.

Speedier review process. On average, reviews in the first half of 2019 took 9.7 weeks to complete, which is 31.8% shorter than the duration in the previous year (14.2 weeks). The review duration is computed from the receipt date of a manuscript to the time that a decision is made by the Editor-in-Chief concerning its publication suitability based on the recommendations of at least two independent peer reviewers. In 2015, the average length was 62.3 weeks, which the editorial office was able to reduce drastically by more than half to 29.8 weeks in the following year.

Stable acceptance rate. The publication acceptance rate for manuscripts received within the first half of 2019 was 70.2%, which is slightly higher than the yearly average of 63.9% from 2015 to 2018. Without exception, every submission is subjected to peer review by at least two independent reviewers. An editorial decision is immediately rendered if non-acceptance is unanimously recommended in the first round. In most cases, a final decision is made after the second round of review—this single-revision policy is imposed to allow concerned authors to consider resubmitting their work elsewhere without undue delay.

On the provenance of peer reviewers. A total of two hundred forty-two (242) scientists and researchers served voluntarily as reviewers in the first half of 2019. More than forty percent of them (43.8%) were based inside the country, while the rest (56.2%) were affiliated in foreign academic and R&D institutions. Their numbers were 250 (local: 50%) and 252 (59%) in 2018 and 2017, respectively. The office has been able to expand its pool of expert reviewers who have provided incisive yet constructive evaluations that allowed our authors to enhance the presentation quality of their manuscripts and even improve their research methodologies.

On authorship and publication charges. The average number of authors per regular article appearing in the first two issues of Volume 148 is 4.3. In the previous two volumes, the numbers were 4 (Vol. 147) and 3.5 (Vol. 146), respectively. The total number of journal pages devoted to regular articles per volume was 718 and 453 in Volumes 147 (in four issues) and 146 (in four issues), respectively. For the first two issues released in 2019, the total number is 391 pages. The number of peer-reviewed articles per issue was increased to twenty from 15, starting in September 2018 (Vol. 147, No. 3). The average length of regular articles appearing in the first half of 2019 is 10 pages, which is practically the same as the average page length (9.9) in the previous three volumes. The journal publisher (DOST) continues to waive journal publication charges for accepted articles and the editorial office does not impose a hard cap on the maximum page length.

New members of the Editorial Board. Two new editorial members were appointed by the DOST upon the recommendation of the Editor-in-Chief and the incumbent board members. They would serve for a term of three years starting January 2019. Rafe Brown (University of Kansas) and Sohichi Hirose (Tokyo Institute of Technology) were invited in appreciation not only of their excellent academic credentials and research accomplishments but also of their direct support and participation in the continued development of science in the country, including the training of young Filipino researchers.

Journal indexing. The office has been able to have SCOPUS reclassify the PJS as multidisciplinary instead of being merely a social science journal. This development is important not only for the sake of classification accuracy but also in exposing the journal content to more search engines and indexing services.

Ongoing challenges. The PJS is working towards eventually earning a yearly journal impact factor and be listed in the Journal Citation Reports. Succeeding in this regard will attract more research contributions especially from underrepresented areas in the social sciences and engineering, as well as in pure and applied physics and mathematics. It will also help in the training of additional early-career scientists and in the production of more STEM Ph.D. graduates, which are of strategic importance to the future of the scientific enterprise system in the country. The steadily increasing number of manuscript submissions and peer-reviewed articles published per volume are critical factors that would help us enlarge readership and get PJS articles cited more frequently.

Five hundred hard copies of every regular journal issue are printed and stored securely before delivery to our institutional and individual subscribers. Presently, the PJS could not do away with the practice and proceed to publish only online (philjournsci.dost.gov.ph) due to existing government regulations on accounting, as well as on the performance evaluation of concerned PJS personnel. Expectedly, the steady rise in manuscript submissions will result in more articles published in more issues per volume and that would imply additional workload at the editorial office and more financial pressure on the part of the publisher.

However, the challenges that the PJS are facing are good ones—they have materialized because the scientific community has responded positively to the considerable resources that have been invested by the government to promote scientific R&D activities in the country. Addressing them earnestly will lead to invaluable lessons learned on good governance, at least for our academic and scientific institutions.

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Editor-In-Chief