

Editorial 32(2): (i) IIER's 2021 review outcomes; (ii) Diversions from core tasks

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This Editorial begins with IIER's usual annual presentation of the details of article review outcomes, now covering seven years, 2015 to 2021 (Table 1). This Editorial's second section, 'Diversions from core tasks' is a follow on from the sub-topic 'Other diversions' which appeared in Editorial 31(2) [1]. Like its predecessor, 'Diversions from core tasks' continues the occasional use of Editorial space to draw attention to diverse issues and developments for IIER and the academic journal publishing industry generally. Equally important, or even more importantly, 'diversions' are needed as a form of resting from the intense 'core tasks' of acknowledging submissions, advising and mentoring authors, and copy editing and publishing.

(i) IIER's 2021 review outcomes

Table 1: Article review outcomes IIER 2015-21 (a)

Year of receipt	No. rec'd	No. rejected editorially (b)	No. reject ext review (c)	No. withdrawn (d)	No. pending	No. accept (e)	No. published (f)	% accepted (g)
2022	296	n.a.	n.a.	1	n.a.	n.a.	41	n.a.
2021	662	531 (80.2%)	39 (5.9%)	6 (0.9%)	0	86	73	13.0%
2020	670	556 (83.0%)	40 (6.0%)	2 (0.3%)	0	72	80	10.7%
2019	475	365 (76.8%)	48 (10.1%)	7 (1.5%)	0	55	71	11.6%
2018	469	349 (74.4%)	44 (9.4%)	6 (1.3%)	0	70	60	14.9%
2017	306	205 (67.0%)	33 (10.8%)	3 (1.0%)	0	65	50	21.2%
2016	196	116 (59.2%)	28 (14.3%)	5 (2.5%)	0	47	40	24.0%
2015	124	75 (60.5%)	2 (1.6%)	4 (3.2%)	0	43	31	34.7%

- a. Data for 2015 finalised 22 April 2016; for 2016 finalised 17 April 2017; data for 2017 finalised 24 April 2018; data for 2018 finalised 20 May 2019; data for 2019 finalised 3 April 2020; data for 2020 finalised 13 April 2021; data for 2021 finalised 30 May 2022. Data for 2022 is at 20 June.
- b. Review advice composed by IIER editorial staff.
- c. Review advice composed by external reviewers. Note that for both categories b. and c. some of the rejected articles may appear again as receivals later in the same year or in a subsequent year. The reasons for counting these instances as rejections are to enable a clearer cut off for each year's outcomes, and to align data collection with the editorial advice, used in a significant proportion of cases, 'Reject. Invite resubmission of a revised or expanded work for a new review process', or similar.
- d. Withdrawn means withdrawn at the request of the authors.
- e. The number of articles accepted from a particular year's receivals (e) does not correspond to the number published in each year (f), owing to time taken for review and revisions, and fluctuations in the speed of these processes.
- f. The number published in a calendar year.
- g. % accepted = No. accepted x 100/No. received

Having done the 'number crunching' for Table 1, the first Editorial reflection could be one prompted by reading Panda's (2022) [2] article titled *Academic publishing: Don't let the number crunchers win*, although Panda was concerned mainly about a type of 'number crunching' quite different from Table 1's 'crunching'. Panda was concerned mainly about the "number crunching" underlying the concept of "high-impact journals", and the use of the numbers so obtained as "performance indicators".

The solution is not to abandon performance indicators, such as the number of papers published in high-impact journals, but neither must we over-rely on them. Indeed many papers are not uncovering new knowledge but revisiting and reviewing previous work. ... Another issue is the power imbalance when it comes to those journals which are most cited. These tend to be heavily dominated by research produced in and about a small number of 'core' countries, mostly the US and the UK, and therefore reproduce existing global power imbalances. (Panda, 2022 [2])

Table 1's column "No. published" does contain "many papers [that] are not uncovering new knowledge", but the characterisation as "revisiting and reviewing previous work" is much too narrow, and arguably could even help to "reproduce existing global power imbalances". These two phrases prompted a revisit (Table 2) to the numerous IIER Editorials which have explored beyond the narrow purpose implied by "new knowledge", and also relate to "existing global power imbalances" [3].

Table 2: Revisiting some IIER Editorial keywords and phrases

31(4)	... create a more equitable publishing environment for research outside of core Anglophone countries	30(2)	... a broad suite of recent actions about time constrained ... "problem themes" ... an increasing concern for the academic research publishing industry
31(3)	Is my topic, country context, research question ... under-represented in IIER? ... improving representation of developing countries in the international educational research literature	29(4)	... three kinds of editorial approaches to copy editing
		29(3)	... <i>career progression</i> , or somewhat colloquially, "looking after authors"
31(2)	... offered inclusivity ... [though] ... many journals seem to be "maxed-out"	29(2)	... "really vital central core of academic publication" ... "looking after authors"
31(1)	... reiterating "why diversity should be valued for IIER"	28(3)	... we accord the authors a 'fair go'
30(4)	Bias in scholarly publishing; Diversity, equity and inclusion	28(2)	... concept of a 'significant issue' is highly subjective
30(3)	... non-traditional publishing for non-traditional authors	28(1)	... maintaining "diversity of contexts, and diversity of topics"

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The 'number crunching' for Table 1 and the 'revisiting' in Table 2 give scope for an optimistic, positive perspective, but cannot fully counter a pessimistic, negative perspective. To be optimistic, the IIER profile as very briefly though not fully outlined in Table 2, is attractive to many aspiring authors, as indicated in Table 1, and in other data such as IIER's Q2 bibliometric profile [4]. Recognising the pessimistic perspective, IIER

is at present "maxed out", but the international academic publishing industry is not, to date, delivering what we would really like to see. This is a good number of *emulators* of IIER, featuring open access; no article publishing charge ("APC"); high quality mentoring and copy editing support; a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion; able to sustain high standards in academic merit; and having strong local or regional societal connections that can help to counter existing "global power imbalances" (Panda, 2022 [2]) in academic publishing.

(ii) Diversions from core tasks

'First time' submitters

Recently (we do not specify a date) we provided editorial reject advice to Author(s) who responded with this seeking of clarification, or further encouragement [Author(s) have given permission to quote]:

First of all, I would like to thank you for your time and attention.
But there was one thing I wanted to be sure of. You stated that I can apply again after making the mentioned arrangements. In this case, you are not rejecting the article completely, do you want a revision from me? I am applying to an international journal for the first time, I hope you can understand me.

We responded to Author(s) with further advice that could be repurposed into an Editorial topic:

Yes, our advice does invite you to revise and resubmit. Although we cannot make any promises or offer any guarantee concerning an eventual acceptance, our advice constitutes an encouragement to proceed. It is more detailed than is usual, and represents a larger investment of editorial staff time than is usual for an individual article. On the matter of being a "first time" submitter to an international journal, we do understand, because it is a frequently occurring and readily recognised circumstance amongst IIER's aspiring authors. Often these authors are encouraged appropriately. However, the more important consideration is expressed in the first paragraph of Editorial staff comments. [The "first paragraph" we referred to here cannot be released, but its essence was a positive recognition of the high potential academic merit of the research.]

We further explained to author(s) the reasons for seeking a permission to quote and the underlying purposes:

The purpose is to provide readers with an assurance that IIER is very aware of circumstances for "first time submitters", with an expansion of the idea that IIER tries to ensure that "these authors are encouraged appropriately". Some illustrations of advice delivered in editorials may be found under <http://www.iier.org.au/about/iier-contents-editorials.html>, for example, <http://www.iier.org.au/iier29/editorial29-2.html>

The author(s) responded very positively, "Of course you can use the quote ... no problem ... would love to be able to assist you in this way. ... make this article more qualified so that [author(s)] can share it with other people." All good, but now comes the difficult part,

outlining very succinctly what we can do and should do to ensure that "these authors are encouraged appropriately". For brevity, consider a very tightly-targeted bulleted list which supplements the comments in (i) above:

- Avoid over-reliance on "new knowledge" as an acceptance criterion, and accord more importance to authors' career progression and representation of under-represented topics and country contexts;
- Make the best possible effort in mentoring and copy editing support for authors, especially in the under-represented categories of junior and novice authors, ESL authors, and non-Anglophone, developing country contexts.

However, an attempt to be tightly-targeted does not help us to avoid subjective judgments, or even resorting to guesswork. Under the pressures of time constraints and increasing numbers of submissions, how can a relatively small team of associate editors [5] be highly expert and invariably objective in choosing authors deserving extra mentoring and copy editing support, or identifying topics and country contexts that are under-represented?

An update on "To ban, or not to ban?"

This topic, aired in Editorial 32(1) [6] after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, surmised that Russia's "... academic research sectors and personnel are being put on notice that exclusion from the international community of scholars is imminent." As events have progressed, that surmising could be made more succinct and explicit, revising it to Russia's "exclusion from the international community is proceeding", to the point where an "international community of scholars" is merged within many other kinds of large and influential communities, such as the European Union. To illustrate with one example from academic publishing, London-based IOP Publishing (Institute of Physics; "... portfolio includes more than 90 journals") has declared that:

IOP Publishing condemns Russia's actions against Ukraine ... We will continue to take steps to comply with the applicable EU, UK and US sanctions as and when they are introduced. ... We hope for a quick resolution of the crisis to bring an end to its devastating impacts on the people of Ukraine. (IOP Publishing, 2022 [7]).

IIER is much smaller than IOP's 90 journals, being only one journal, but we could add our tiny voice. It is unlikely to be elevated to the weird new status of being deemed "Russophobic" by the Kremlin (*ABC News*, 2022 [8]). To delve into a quantitative perspective, IIER's involvement with Russian authors has been very minor. During 2019-21, IIER received 39 submissions with one or more Russian authors (2.16% of 1807 submissions for 2019-21). The outcome was one acceptance, in IIER 30(4) (0.47% of 213 acceptances for 2019-21). IIER received 15 Ukrainian submissions during 2020-21, outcome one acceptance in 30(2), though of course, one accept from 39 "tries" cannot be compared meaningfully with one accept from 15 "tries".

Demise of IIER and similar journals?

This heading was prompted by David Crotty's article titled *Market consolidation and the demise of the independently publishing research society* (Crotty, 2021 [9]). Whilst IIER is certainly in the category "independently publishing research society", Table 1 indicates quite well that IIER is not in the "demise" category. As indicated above in relation to Table 1, IIER is in the "needs emulators" category, to help meet the demand that IIER has to turn away. David Crotty did not discuss this category, as his article concentrated on the case of "an independent not-for-profit society with limited scale", that *had* to become compliant with the Plan S path towards open access (Plan S, 2022 [10]), and *has* to replace the funding being received from subscriptions and pay per view readers. IIER is not in that position, having operated successfully since 2008, featuring open access, entirely voluntary staffing, with an ultra-low budget drawn upon only for a low cost website (currently A\$310 per year, sponsored by WAIER).

IIER's transition after retiring our printed version has implemented all of the important features of open access (IIER, 2022 [11]). IIER does not need the Plan S path to OA, which is fortunate. As Crotty (2021, [9]) has pointed out:

Plan S asks a lot from a journal in order to qualify as compliant. Let's start with the technology requirements, which include the use of persistent identifiers like DOIs, participation in a long-term digital preservation or archiving program like CLOCKSS or Portico ... [omitting some very technical details] ... That's a lot to ask for from a small, low-budget journal owned and run on a shoestring by the community, and many would have to invest significantly to meet these demands. ... Beyond the technological requirements, the Plan S reporting demands also make it impossible for the small players to be in compliance. First, there's the price transparency details, ... [omitting more technical details]

IIER cannot "invest significantly" when the budget is about A\$310 per year. We note that many other OA journals are staying away from Plan S (Frantsvåg & Strømme, 2019 [12]). Also, whilst IIER editorial correspondence often includes questions about indexing in Scopus and others (IIER, 2019 [13]) we have never received a question about Plan S open access compliance.

The diversion into David Crotty's "demise" article prompted some further diversions, into looking for strategies that could promote the prospering of the "small, low-budget journal owned and run on a shoestring by the community" (Crotty, 2021 [9]). To mention one idea, the USA's ACRL has drawn attention to a role for libraries:

Journals are the most common type of publication in library programs. Libraries can offer small scholarly and scientific societies an alternative to contracting with large commercial publishers. (ACRL, 2021 [14])

A good number of Australian university libraries do offer journal publishing support, often based on hosting an OJS installation (PKP, n.d. [15]), but typically the journals supported are journals conducted by staff or departments within the university. Rarely

does this kind of support extend to universities or academic research associations in other countries. This circumstance suggests an opportunity for the new Australian Government to fund an economical editorial and publishing support service, as a soft diplomacy initiative directed towards Pacific and South-east Asian countries. Delivery could be via the National Library, or consortia of Australian university libraries or university presses. The key features could be, *open access, conducted by your community and in English or bilingual*.

Being a diversion, reading around "prosper" as a way to avoid "demise" branched widely, including several other notables. Conrad & Padula (2022, [16]) commented upon scholarly publishing trends to watch in 2022:

The top trends that stand out this year all require cultural shifts toward greater equity and inclusivity in scholarly communications.

Agreed, "absolutely". Carlier et al. (2022, [17]) discussed "aspirational metrics" and "citational justice", commenting:

It is important to pay attention to whom we cite, especially, as there is increasing evidence that women, people of colour, and other minoritised groups are systematically under cited.

Another agreed. Cargill et al. (2017, [18]) published a very interesting book chapter, open access, commencing with the sentence:

Indonesian universities are now facing a mandatory requirement for candidates to publish a paper in English in an international journal before a PhD degree can be awarded ...

Yes, we know, but agreement is somewhat tentative, feeling that in current circumstances the international academic publishing in English industry is encountering stresses in meeting the demand, especially in relation to high quality mentoring and copy editing support, and prompt turnaround times for review and publishing processes. But on the bright side, the 21 articles in IIER 32(2) show a pleasingly high diversity in source countries, including Indonesia represented in three fine articles.

This section is headed (ii) Diversions from core tasks, which is perhaps a little ambiguous. An undesirable slowing down from core tasks, but could diverse reading be a desirable and necessary activity, or even a core task?

Obituary: iMac W80022SZ5PC, 11 February 2010 to 23 March 2022

In these very troubled times, with so many untimely, tragic deaths occurring in apocalypse zones elsewhere in the world, an obituary for a computer in Australia may seem inappropriate, even facetious and disrespectful. However, Apple iMac with serial number W80022SZ5PC performed a unique and hopefully very enduring role for IIER for 12 years. So, old friend, this obituary is well and truly earned.

From IIER volume 20, dated 2010, all IIER files found under <http://www.iier.org.au> were created on and uploaded from iMac W80022SZ5PC. For twelve years you worked your guts out for IIER, along with many other activities.

W80022SZ5PC's long service took a toll upon her/his/its health. Major surgeries included two hard disk replacements, several keyboard replacements, and numerous new mouses/mice, and there was your stoic endurance through many software and network connection upgrades.

Perhaps sadly, there was no respectful period of mourning for W80022SZ5PC's death on 23 March 2022. Thanks to the backup on Seagate Backup Plus Slim serial NABEAGD4, your handover to the next generation, represented by a new iMac who cannot be readily personalised due to the lack of an old-style serial number, was able to proceed with haste, within a few hours. That could be regarded as an unceremonious "quickie" handing over, something that no one would notice, so we must offer this obituary.

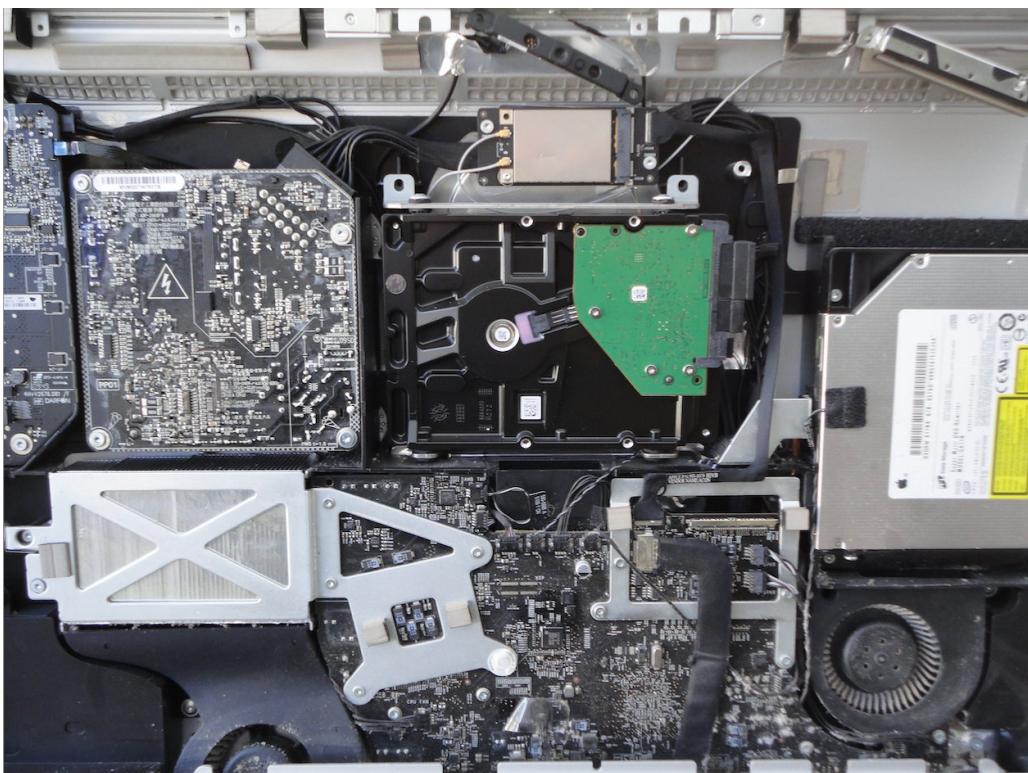


Figure 1: Interior of iMac W80022SZ5PC exposed for removal of hard disk (mid-upper centre). The bottom right area shows an accumulation of dust, mostly microscopic fibres of cellulose from paper tissues, which may have triggered the passing away on 23 March 2022.

Farewell, old friend W80022SZ5PC! I apologise for a final indignity that I had to impose, which was dismemberment to extract and destroy your hard disk. Owing to the untimely

nature of your passing, there was no opportunity to "cleanse" your hard disk. Therefore, there is a risk that e-waste scavengers may obtain your disk and extract sensitive information that may be sold on the dark web, such as that needed to manage all those files that you wrote to <http://www.iier.org.au> (passwords, etc.).

Old friend, a brief period of mourning your passing was followed by another kind of dark period. This is the period, perhaps not quite finished yet, of getting up to speed with all the new versions of the software I must have for IIER editorial operations (and other activities). How fervently I wish that modern developers of software would heed some of the great maxims from earlier times, most notably:

- the KISS principle ('keep it simple, stupid');
- if it ain't broke don't fix it;
- please understand the fuzzy dividing line between artificial intelligence and the natural stupidity of the programmers who create it.

However, to look on the bright side, new friend iMac (anonymous, not having an old-style serial number) is cooler (temperature-wise), has a brilliantly improved screen display, and is a little bit faster. Only a little bit faster, owing to various time-wasting features in the software replacements, but that is too dreary a story to tell here, and also the promised publication date for 32(2) is nigh.

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4. See IIER's Q2 bibliometric profile at <http://www.iier.org.au/about/iier-bibliometrics.html>
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