

Editorial for 23.1

A year at the helm: reflecting on roles, responsibilities and progress

Wendy L. Tate and Louise Knight

1 Introduction

It is a year since we took up the post of Editor-in-Chief (EiC) of the Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management (JPSM). It has been an interesting year with plenty of challenges, several surprises - some pleasing, but others less so – and several important developments. In this editorial we report on recent progress, and discuss the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders in the publishing process.

2 Strategy Issues

2.1 Continuity and Growth

Our long-term goal is to maintain the upward trajectory of the quality and standing of the journal, building its contribution to the field and its international reputation (Knight and Tate, 2016). The Journal was founded with a focus on purchasing and supply management (PSM) and has stayed true to its roots. The field of PSM is evolving rapidly, both shaping and being shaped by the overarching field of supply chain management. This goal means aiming for measured growth in the quality and quantity of manuscripts submitted and published (Knight and Tate, 2016). We prioritize quality, evaluated in terms of originality, rigor and significance. Importantly, articles need to have explicit academic and managerial significance to purchasing and supply management. The issue of rigor is diligently scrutinized.

Our first year has been focused on continuous improvement in all aspects of publishing at the Journal, including reviewing and editing manuscripts and procedures for timely processing from submission through to publication. There have been some snags with dealing with some manuscripts in the transition between editors and editorial offices but these are now all addressed, and mostly resolved.

For 2017, JPSM continues to be published in four issues per year, though the average number of articles per issue will increase. This increase reflects good news: the number of submissions to the journal is increasing, and the geographical spread of submissions is also on the rise. During 2017 we will review 'supply and demand' and quality and consider our policy for the number of articles and issues per year from 2018 onwards. For now, the acceptance rate remains fairly constant, and is consistent with other prestigious journals in the supply

management area. The Journal's reputation has continued to climb with many authors, reviewers and Associate Editors (AE) promoting its significance to their departments and their deans.

2.2 Diversity

As promised, we continue to encourage diversity in research questions and methodologies. To support this, we have recruited more Associate Editors to better cover the range of methodologies and methods, and levels and units of analysis.

We hope the recent JPSM special issue (2016, issue 4) on 'novel methods', initiated in 2014 by Asta Salmi, Joanne Meehan and Aristides Matopoulos, and us when we were JPSM Associate Editors, will serve as an important resource for researchers and research supervisors in promoting innovation in the research process. In addition to empirical articles using novel (to PSM) methodologies, the issue includes a set of 'Notes and Debates' articles on specific types of methodologies including experiments, secondary data, and modeling. These articles and Notes and Debates have generated much discussion and are being read and circulated across many outlets.

2.3 Community

The relationship with IPSERA has continued to expand with both co-editors serving on its executive board. We greatly appreciate and value this relationship and will work to sustain, and indeed enhance it. We have continued to seek out and engage other professional associations such as the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals, the Institute for Supply Management, the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply and the International Federation of Purchasing and Supply Management as well as others. With input also from Associate Editors, both Editors have participated in panel presentations and discussion with these organizations in terms of alignment of goals and ways in which the organizations can work together to move the field of PSM forward.

3 Roles and Responsibilities

Much has been written about what constitutes a good manuscript but there is less on what it takes to be a good academic and meet the needs of the growing academic community as it relates to publishing. Guide and Ketokivi (2016) called this "proper author etiquette". Below, we highlight some of the issues we have encountered recently and set out JPSM policy in terms of what we believe can be expected from various stakeholders in the publishing process. The issues and expectations are explicitly related to the long term strategic goals for the Journal.

3.1 Resourcing

The number of submissions is rising. We are asking more of everyone, with rising expectations at every stage of the process – from quality of initial submission, to quality of reviews, guidance from Associate Editors, detailed response to reviewer. We have recruited more AEs and more reviewers. We still need more, responsive reviewers and would be pleased to hear from

potential new reviewers or have reviewers nominated by authors, Associate Editors and other reviewers.

3.2 Contributing Manuscripts and Reviews: what if everyone were too busy?

Unfortunately, the JPSM editorial team is contending with a significant number of declined invitations to review manuscripts. This seems to be a common problem for journal editors as discovered during a recent Elsevier editor event and through many discussions with editors of other supply chain journals. Reviewing is an essential part of our job as academics. *If your goal is to publish in the Journal, academic etiquette requires that you should also be willing to serve as a JPSM reviewer!* (Guide and Ketokivi 2016)

Academics should not expect to submit their paper to a journal without also expecting to review for that journal. This includes colleagues who are new to the academy. Submitting papers and yet refusing to review indicates a lack of respect for all those who take the time to deal with the submission, and a lack of collegiality. At JPSM we try to limit the number of review requests to four per year. However, when the reviewer pool is restricted by so many that 'don't have time' the work falls disproportionately on those that do demonstrate commitment to the community. We want to reduce the frustration experienced by these supportive colleagues, the effort needed by handling editors to find suitable reviewers and the delays that declined invitations cause in the review process. Therefore *if you see JPSM as a potential outlet for your work, expect to receive requests to review for JPSM.*

Your help with this is much appreciated. From 2017, the EIC reserves the right to desk reject a manuscript if none of the authors on the manuscript volunteer their time to review for the journal or consistently decline review requests. With mutual consideration and collaborative effort we can, together, improve the academy, and it is the only way that we can maintain JPSM's increasing impact and quality trajectory!

3.3 Authors: some requirements and requests

We have noticed a number of issues relating to authors' behaviors and the work they submit to the Journal, all of which relate in one respect or another to ethics (Guide and Ketokivi 2016). JPSM only publishes research which is both relevant and original. Problems with originality can relate to copyright or plagiarism, but can also reflect poor judgment about publishing multiple articles from one dataset. In this section we also discuss the need to disclose a manuscript's history and to ensure the most has been made of any previous reviews.

3.3.1 Relevance

Make sure that there is a good fit between your work and the Journal. Occasionally at JPSM a quick check by the editorial team for words like "purchasing", "supply", "procurement", etc. reveals a lack of relevance to the PSM community! This lack of fit is the most common reason for a desk rejection (i.e. the paper is rejected without being sent out for review). The second most common reason that an article does not make it out to the review process is the lack of explicit managerial and theoretical relevance to PSM. As explained in our inaugural editorial

(Knight and Tate, 2016), we welcome contributions ‘at the boundaries’ of the field. Just as we seek to encourage methodological diversity, we are keen to receive papers which bridge to other fields, disciplines or new (to JPSM) theoretical perspectives. We do however need authors to demonstrate the relevance of their work to the JPSM readership, so that the contribution can be effective in developing the field of PSM.

3.3.2 Copyright and Plagiarism

We have encountered duplication of previously published material, sloppy re-wording, or missing references/citations. This most often involves self-plagiarism: re-using or misrepresenting material that has been used in the authors’ previous publications. Before a manuscript is passed along to an Associate Editor it is run through CrossCheck which is a software that detects plagiarism. The output of CrossCheck is a percent of material recognized in other published sources. There are times where the authors are unaware that their material is already available in the public domain – for example, posted on a conference website or as a working paper somewhere on the Internet. Such situations can breach copyright. Authors must only submit work when they are sure they are entitled to do so.

Each Cross-Check report is evaluated separately – a high percentage of recognized material could be perfectly legitimate, and conversely a very short item of recognized text could indicate a fundamental problem. Where the problem seems to be inadequate paraphrasing of past research, we may invite the authors to correct the problem and resubmit the manuscript. Similarly if we can see that the submission is a developed version of a conference paper, we will give the authors the opportunity to resolve the matter. At all times, the ‘burden of proof’ lies with the authors, who will need, for example, to negotiate to have working papers removed from websites, conference papers taken down from websites, etc. and then explain to us how they have dealt with the problem. In all other cases, unless we have been alerted to an issue by the authors in their covering letter, we will desk reject submissions. There is extensive advice on copyright and plagiarism available via JPSM’s publisher’s website (www.elsevier.com).

3.3.3 Disclosure about manuscript history and data

Transparency is key to ethical publishing. It is not uncommon to receive papers that have been rejected from other journals. Usually this is fine, but we have some advice for authors in this situation. Since the reviewer pool across in the PSM community is relatively small, a paper rejected from another journal may well be sent by us to a colleague who has previously reviewed the paper for another journal. Since time is so limited, reviewers don’t want to (and most likely will refuse to) review the same paper twice if the original comments have not been addressed. *Be considerate of the time of others!* Always take into account the comments and concerns of previous reviewers and editors before submitting to a journal. It is helpful to the JPSM editors if authors explain that the paper was rejected from another journal but changes have been made, and show the paper has practical and conceptual ties to PSM. In this case, the transparency can only benefit the authors. *Let us know upon submission the history of the article!*

It is also important to explain how the manuscript submitted relates to an empirical project and other papers – whether published, in preparation or just planned – based on the same project. We share concerns expressed by other editors on this issue and we also recognize the considerable pressure to publish experienced by academics. It can sometimes be difficult to judge how best to balance research inputs and outputs. There is excellent advice available from, amongst others, the Academy of Management¹ and publishers such as Elsevier. Authors should make use of such resources to shape their publication strategy and then explain their choices in the covering letters for all the papers submitted to journals based on one project.

3.3.4 Rejections, revisions and acceptances

Submissions are rising so we can and will become increasingly selective in terms of the articles that move forward to publication. We want to balance the quality and quantity of JPSM articles to meet our dual aims of raising standards and serving the academic community as the key outlet for good PSM research.

It is important to work with the Associate Editors who are very engaged in ensuring quality, relevance and rigor. AE's have the authority to make editorial rejects and will not let a manuscript go out for review if they don't think that the review process will be successful.

Regarding revisions, it is very important that authors who are afforded the opportunity to revise their manuscripts write detailed, considerate and explicit 'response to reviewers'. These must address each and every point raised by reviewers. Where authors decide not to follow a piece of advice from reviewers, they should clearly explain their decision.

Sometimes reviewers provide conflicting advice, which would take revisions to a paper in different directions. In such cases, handling editors will provide guidance, and may invite authors to discuss options prior to implementing a major revision. This step provides no guarantee that a revision will be adequate, but we see it as an important developmental opportunity and as making most effective use of authors', reviewers' and editors' time.

4 Reviewers

We have also noticed a number of issues relating to reviewers' practices and their reviews, and have some requests here, too.

4.1.1 Conflicts of interest

In business and management studies, double blind review is recognized as central to assuring fair evaluation of manuscripts, and vital for the development of the discipline. Handling editors

¹ See <http://aom.org/Multi-Media/Ethics-Video-Series/Slicing-the-Data-in-Publishing.aspx>

try to ensure that reviewers are (relatively) 'distant' from authors. Within PSM however we work in a close community with strong international links and so, occasionally, those receiving an invitation to review might find they (think they) know the identity of authors. In such cases reviewers must disclose the issue to the handling editor. *Don't agree to review a paper written by your close colleagues, doctoral students, co-authors or someone you know well personally!*

4.1.2 Review quality

Regrettably, but fortunately only rarely, we receive a review whose tone is aggressive or insulting, or which is self-serving for the reviewer (i.e. encouraging authors to cite the reviewer's own work where it's not really appropriate). All reviewer comments should be constructive. For the majority of JPSM reviewers, the following advice is superfluous but we offer it to clearly set out JPSM policy:

- 1) Reviews must be meaningful. A recommendation to the handling editor and a couple of sentences do not constitute a good quality review.
- 2) Reviews must provide constructive commentary on the paper, pointing out its strengths and weaknesses, and suggestions for improvement.
- 3) The tone of reviews must be fair and considerate.
- 4) Reviewers should only recommend their own work where this is highly pertinent. Self-promotion is not appropriate. Any uncertainty about this issue can be covered through a 'comment to the editor'; the handling editor can then judge what advice to give the authors.

To complement these requirements aimed at addressing occasional shortcomings, we recommend advice from Craig Crossland, the winner of the Academy of Management Review's Developmental Reviewer Award for 2015, who sets out very well his 'thanks' approach to reviewing in a short video².

4.1.3 Review timeliness

Overall, lead times for reviewing and decisions at JPSM are good and improving. The Editorial Office and handling editors keep in contact with reviewers where reviews are overdue. One area of difficulty is when colleagues do not respond to invitations to review in a timely manner. This is costly not just in terms of delay and uncertainty for the authors, but in 'transaction costs' for the JPSM editorial team. *Please be timely in the acceptance of invitations to review. If you choose to accept, follow the timeline suggested. If you can't meet the timeline but would be willing to do the review if the timing could be adjusted, then please contact the JPSM Editorial Office.*

² <http://aom.org/Multi-Media/Publications/Academy-of-Management-Review/Developmental-Reviewer-Award-Winner-Craig-Crossland-Shares-His--Thanks--Approach.aspx?terms=craig%20crossland>

4.1.4 Recommendation, comments and decisions

The JPSM review format asks reviewers for their recommendation (accept, minor revisions, major revisions, reject) and their comments for authors. We ask reviewers **not** to specify their recommendation directly in comments to authors. Recommendations are just that – advice reviewers provide to the handling editor.

There is also space for reviewers to provide comments to the handling editor. Comments to the editor are always welcome, and especially in cases where reviewers find their evaluation of the manuscript is at a margin between two recommendations. These comments are very useful to the editorial team as we work to drive up quality, prioritize and manage the overall number of papers published, and harmonize standards across methodologies, handling editors, reviewers etc. With the reviewers' recommendations and comments, the handling editor then decides whether to reject, or accept or invite revisions to the manuscript. Occasionally handling editors have to deal with highly diverse reviews, and there is a risk that reviewers will be concerned or offended if the editor's decision runs contrary to their opinion of the paper. We are mindful of this and make sure that the reasons for our decisions are clear in the decision letter to authors, which is copied to reviewers.

5 Looking Forward and Thanks

The quantity of contributions and the quality of those contributions has continued to increase throughout 2016. The statistics for 2016 will soon be compiled and presented at the IPSERA meeting in April 2017, and reported in a later editorial.

We want to continue to support a journal that publishes high quality, interesting and original research! We will continue to encourage all forms of research methods, seeking quality and diversity in knowledge development. We will publish research that makes a conceptual and practical contribution to purchasing and supply. The key themes of continuity, growth, diversity and community developed in 2016 remain central to our objectives for 2017. The editorial team will continue to develop our approach of engaged editorship, emphasizing our contribution as 'gardeners' rather than 'gatekeepers' (Carter and Ellram, 2010). We also want to continue to expand our geographical reach by increasing the number of Associate Editors and having all stakeholders, but especially ourselves, the Associate Editors and members of the Editorial Review Board actively promote and encourage submissions to the Journal in their local communities.

Thank you to all contributors to JPSM: authors, reviewers, and Associate Editors! We look forward to a productive and impactful 2017.

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