

Editorial: Year 2017 Report

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1 Introduction

Biometrical Journal (BIMJ) publishes papers on statistical methods and their applications in life sciences including medicine, environmental sciences and agriculture. Methodological developments should be motivated by an interesting and relevant problem from these areas. Ideally, the manuscript should include a description of the problem and a section detailing the application of the new methodology to the problem. Case studies, review articles and letters to the editors are also welcome. Biometrical Journal is edited in cooperation with the German (<http://www.biometrische-gesellschaft.de/>) and the Austro-Swiss (<https://www.ibs-roes.org/>) Region of the International Biometric Society (IBS, see also <http://www.biometricsociety.org/>).

2 Editorial Board

In editing BIMJ, the editorial board plays a crucial role. At present the EB includes 35 Associate Editors, with expertise in a range of methodological and applied areas. For all the work of editorial board (EB) members, we deeply wish to thank each of them. For six members of the EB, Ørnulf Borgan, William Browne, Leonard Held, Ian White, Thomas Kneib and Duncan Lee, the period which they agreed to serve as Associate Editors for the BIMJ has come to an end, and we take this opportunity to utmostly thank all of them for their great and outstanding contribution to the success of the Journal. We will clearly miss them. At the same time, we have the opportunity to welcome six new AEs: Jan Beyersmann (Ulm), Hans Ulrich Bulger (Hoffmann-La Roche, Basel), Carmen Cadarso Suárez (Santiago de Compostela), Ekkehard Glimm (Novartis, Basel), Bettina Grün (Linz) and Michael Höhle (Stockholm). To them and to all the other AEs who decided to continue to collaborate with us during the new year and to promote the quality of BIMJ, we send our warmest welcome and wish for a successful work.

We also thank the numerous referees who have spent their time and expertise on a voluntary basis to help improve our peer review process. The names of all referees serving during 2017 have been listed in the December 2017 issue. Our Reproducible Research Editor, Dr. Fabian Scheipl, has worked with great skill, organization, and dedication to

Table 1: Distribution of 2017 new manuscript submissions (n =328) by geographical region

Region	Freq	Perc. (%)
Africa	10	3.05
America	103	31.40
Asia	75	22.87
Europe	134	40.85
Oceania	6	1.83

the new and emerging issue of *reproducible research* in biomedical research, and reached a number of important results in this context. He has been supported by Fabian Raters (Göttingen) and Ian White (Cambridge, UK), to whom we express our sincerest gratitude. During the last year we had the chance to work with Danielle Flemming, our Wiley contact of the Journal, and, last but absolutely not least, to continue our collaboration with Monika Kortenjann who was the responsible for the Editorial Office of BIMJ. Without both of them, BIMJ would have never been the lovely place it is.

3 Submission and acceptance statistics

In 2017, 328 new manuscripts were submitted to BIMJ, a value that is considerably larger than the 262 received in 2016, and we hope this increasing trend to be in line with increasing quality of submitted manuscripts. Out of the 328 submissions, 283 are Research Papers, representing approximately the 86.3 % of the total, with only a small portion of the total coming either from Case Studies (3, 0.9%), Review Article (12, 3.7%), Short communications (19, 5.8%), Book reviews (9, 2.7%) or Letters to the Editor (2, 0.6%). BIMJ received submission from around 40 countries, with the largest proportion coming from the United States (22.5%), followed by Germany (11.5%), Brazil (6.1%), Canada and the United Kingdom (each with approximately 5%), India (4.2%), Belgium and Spain (4% each). Each of the remaining countries contributed less than 3.5% of the total new submissions. Table 1 shows the distribution of 2017 new manuscript submissions by geographic region. As of January 31, 2018, the status of the 328 manuscripts received during 2017 is described by the following Table 2.

We see that, at the time of writing this report, we have a final decision for 182 manuscripts, while 146 are either under review with an Associate Editor (AE, 46) or under revision (81, 19) with the authors. Therefore, the rejection rate is equal to 50%, a value which is lower when compared with previous years evidence. It is worth noticing that, while the immediate “Reject” decision is particular to the Co-Editor, the “Reject” one is not always based on a standard review process. Sometimes the Co-Editor asks the appropriate AE to support him with the assessment of the manuscript before launching the revision process and sending it out for review.

In 2017, BIMJ has continued the tradition of providing fast and high-quality reviews.

Table 2: Distribution of 2016 new manuscript submissions ($n = 328$) by current status

Status	Freq.	Perc. (%)
Accept	15	4.57
Major	81	24.70
Minor	19	5.79
Under Review	46	14.02
Immediate Reject	3	0.92
Reject	164	50.00
Total	328	

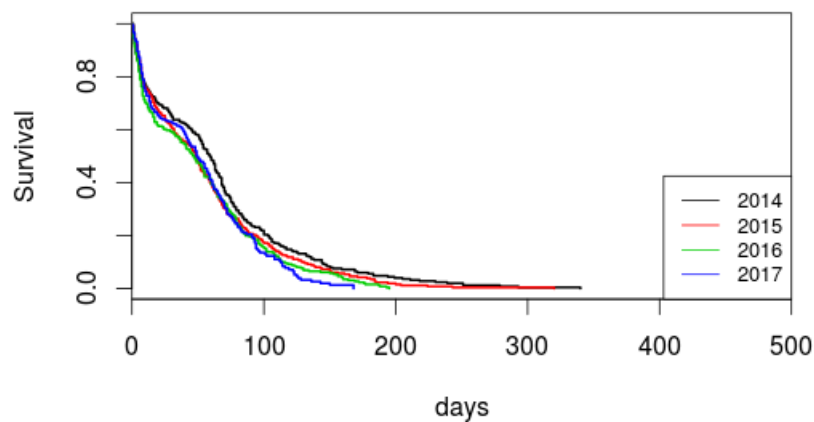


Figure 1: Kaplan-Meier survival curve estimates of the review times in days for original submissions

Our review times are among the best in the statistics context, and we are greatly in debt to our AEs and referees for their dedication to this purpose. Figure 1 displays the Kaplan-Meier survival curve estimates for time from submission to first decision for all the manuscripts submitted in 2014-2017, stratified by year. As it can be easily noticed, in the last four years, there has been a strong commitment to return to authors a more accurate and timely feedback, in order to establish BIMJ as one of the leading journals in applied statistics and biometry. The corresponding median times have decreased from 62 days in 2014 to 49 days in 2017, in line with the value (47 days) registered for 2016. We have always to keep in mind that, during these years, the co-Editors and all the members of the EB have tried to establish an increasingly close connection, with the aim at making the decision more effective and shared. This has helped us to substantially decrease the time to first decision for papers with evident problems in the requirements explicitly declared in the scope and aims of BIMJ.

4 Special issues special topics

The policy of special issues has continued to develop in the last years, and has proven to be an effective promotional strategy for the Journal. In 2017, volume 59 has included one special issue on “Joint modeling of longitudinal and time-to-event data and beyond” (vol. 59, 6), guest edited by Carmen Cadarso Suárez (Santiago de Compostela), Nadja Klein (Göttingen), Thomas Kneib (Göttingen), Geert Molenberghs (Leuven) and Dimitris Rizopoulos (Rotterdam). Further, volume 59 has included four special topics, the first “Clinical research design, rare diseases, and personalized medicine” (vol. 59, 4) coming from ISCB 2015 and guest edited by Werner Brannath (Bremen), Armin Koch (Hannover) and Kit Roes (Utrecht). The second “Multiple comparison procedures” (vol. 59, 4) coming from MCP2015 and guest edited by Franz Bretz (Novartis), Franz Koenig (Wien), Sanat Sarkar (Philadelphia) and Ajit C. Tamhane (Evanston). The third “Latent variable models for longitudinal data”, guest edited by Francesco Bartolucci (Perugia) and Paolo Giordani (Roma). The fourth one is a new initiative for BIMJ and responds to the need for BIMJ to keep focussed on current and emerging themes in the area. This may help the BIMJ readership to stay tuned on recent developments in the field, either from an empirical and a theoretical perspective. In this perspective, we are delighted to present a new section in BIMJ, the discussion papers, addressing biometric problems of wide and current interest. These are discussed by experts in the fields in a way that they are accessible to a wide audience and readership, where the target is not only the academic community but also the wider community of biometric practitioners. The series has started with a paper by Stefan Wellek on “A critical evaluation of the current p-value controversy”. For this first attempt, we have received 10 short manuscripts in the form of comments/contributions to the general discussion, followed by the reply of the Author.

Several other special issues and special topics are in progress, coming either from conferences as for the ISCB2016, ISCB2017, EMR-IBS2017, or covering topics of large interest in the applied statistics field. We have tried and currently trying to strengthen the role of special issues guest editors (as for the AEs) in the decision process, in order to help increasing the quality of submissions and finalizing the special issues.

5 Next steps?

- Special Issues. We have experienced mixed outcomes with special issues. We think that the role of special issues guest editors (as for the AEs) in the definition, review and decision process should be further strengthened, to help us choose candidates and finalize high quality special issues.
- Discussion papers. There are a few interesting emerging areas where a solid state of thought is not still present. The topics should be of enough broad interest to be available to a wide audience and not too specific to be read by only small groups of

experts. We are glad to consider comments and contributions coming from members of the EB of BIMJ or from internationally leading researchers on potential topics to be covered in the next issues. Empirical applications should be given more attention than methodological innovations and, among these, we should look at those empirical applications that may be useful for the practitioners.

- Practitioners' corners, with interesting, and possibly original, empirical applications, with a view on original ways for looking at new or newly emerging fields of empirical research. These could also widen the Journal's audience to non-academic readers.

6 Reproducible Research

BIMJ has devoted strong efforts to promote the Reproducible Research (RR) principle, see Hothorn et al. (Biometrical Journal, 51(4), 553–555, 2009) and Hofner et al. (Biometrical Journal, 58(2), 416–427, 2016); it is therefore a strict requirement that the integrity of the methods published in BIMJ is well demonstrated in a paper and that readers can use and apply the methods. Therefore, the editors usually ask authors to submit programs and data as supplementary information, according to the guidelines available at

[http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/\(ISSN\)1521-4036/homepage/ForAuthors.html](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/(ISSN)1521-4036/homepage/ForAuthors.html), to demonstrate the reproducibility of results detailed in the manuscript.

Due to the efforts of BIMJ over the last years, the number of manuscripts which are reproducible has continuously increased. An analysis of common reproducibility issues has been discussed by Hofner et al. (2009). Based on these findings, updated guidelines for structuring code submission to the BIMJ have been established with the aim at helping authors in this respect. We hope to be more effective and to establish BIMJ as the first applied statistics and biometry media to have an almost 100% of the published manuscripts completely reproducible by interested readers.