

# ASIS&T Scholarly Communication Survey

by Margeaux Johnson and Nancy K. Roderer

As of January 2008 the *Journal of the American Society for Information Science & Technology (JASIST)* will follow the “green road” open access model – authors publishing in the *Journal* (and only authors) may post preprints to their own or their institution’s repositories with links to the final article and to the online journal.

The ASIS&T Board of Directors arrived at this decision after a detailed analysis that weighed the logistical, economic and philosophical issues involved. With the *JASIST* publisher, Wiley-Blackwell, we agreed to institute this policy on a trial basis and to work together to monitor the impact of the new policy. We were interested broadly in understanding what effects the new policy would have on submissions, readership and subscriptions, and we agreed to conduct baseline and subsequent surveys to track changes in these areas.

The first survey was conducted online in late 2007 and addressed four areas:

- Who are our members, authors and potential authors?
- What are the publication trends among these groups?
- What level of access is there to journals among these groups?
- Are our members, authors and the information science community aware of and/or participating in the open access movement?

This article reports generally on the results of survey. Two additional articles in the *Bulletin* in the coming months will continue discussion of the survey results, focusing on the subsets of respondents who were ASIS&T members and open access authors.

## Groups Addressed by Survey

There were three groups we wanted to reach with the survey: current ASIS&T members, *JASIST* authors and information science researchers. These three groups are not separate and distinct: many individuals belong to all three categories. Blackwell collaborated with ISI to determine contact information for authors currently publishing in the fields of “information science & library science,” “library science” and “information technology and communication systems.” They also determined contact information for authors who had published articles in *JASIST* or similar publications. The peer-reviewed publications selected for the survey were the *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*,

*Information Processing and Management*, *Information Research*, *Journal of Documentation*, *Journal of Information Science*, *Library Information Science and Research* and *Scientometrics*. From these contacts, Blackwell distributed the survey to 3,740 researchers. Additionally, ASIS&T distributed the survey to a randomly selected group of 2,414 members, some of whom may have overlapped with the authors identified by Blackwell and ISI. We received 581 responses of which 348 (or 59.9%) were from ASIS&T members.

ASIS&T and Blackwell developed the survey questions jointly. A number of questions were taken from surveys created by Ian Rowlands and his collaborators.

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## Who Are Our Members, Authors and Potential Authors?

Information science is traditionally seen as an area of western scholarship, but our survey results indicate that a growing number of scholars resides outside the western world. While most of the respondents were from North America

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(71.9%) and Europe (11.4%), 12.9% identified themselves as being from other areas of the world. Regionally, 7.4% were from Asia, 2.8% the Middle East, 2.2% Australia and 0.5% South America. In addition to these respondents, we received several write-in comments from researchers working in Africa, a region that was accidentally omitted from our responses. As one commenter pointed out, this distribution may reflect “the imbalance in scientific rating globally.” The discipline of information science is growing globally and we must consider the implications of scholarly communication and publication models in a global context.

The majority of respondents (70.2%) identified themselves as employees of colleges or universities. This result is not surprising, considering that academic positions require publication for promotion and tenure and that our survey solicited authors who had published in premier journals in the field of information science. We did see a small number of responses from researchers in other institutions, including commercial organizations (6.7%), government (5.9%), research institutes (3.3%) and self-employed individuals (3.8%).

The respondents were also asked how many years of research experience they had. The two most common responses were 1-5 years (24.6%) and 21+ years (23.8%). This spread seems to indicate that there are many researchers at both ends of the spectrum, when it comes to research experience, with fewer people in the middle. It also underscores the need

for mentoring in our field as the reins pass from one generation of researchers to the next. Overall, the discipline seems to be undergoing a transition. There are increasing numbers of new researchers and contributions coming from increasingly diverse regions.

### What Are Current Publication Trends among Information Science Researchers?

The majority of those surveyed, 68%, submit research papers to peer-reviewed journals. The following are the top 10 journals considered by the 395 people indicating that they submit research papers:

- *Journal of the American Society for Information Science & Technology* (197 responses)
- *Information Processing & Management* (92 responses)
- *Journal of Documentation* (65 responses)
- *Library and Information Science Research (LISR)* (50 responses)
- *College and Research Libraries* (49 responses)
- *Scientometrics* (39 responses)
- *Journal of Academic Librarianship* (35 responses)
- *Journal of Information Science* (35 responses)
- *Library Quarterly* (31 responses)
- *Journal of the Medical Library Association* (24 responses)
- *Portal: Libraries and the Academy* (24 responses)

Authors from *JASIST*, *Journal of Documentation*, *Library and Information Science*, *Scientometrics* and *Journal of Information Science* were solicited for this study so these results may not be reflective of overall trends in the field.

Even though the same authors rated impact factor (IF) as an important criterion when choosing the journal to which they would submit their publications, only three of the 10 journals with the highest impact factor in the field of “information science & library science” as listed in *Journal Citation Reports (JCR)* appear on the list above. They are *JASIST* (IF 1.555, ranked 6th by *JCR*), *Information Processing and Management* (IF 1.546, ranked 7th by *JCR*) and the *Journal of Documentation* (IF 1.439, ranked 9th by *JCR*). The five journals with the highest impact factors in *JCR* do not appear in the list of the top 10 journals that the authors in our survey consider when submitting. Of these five only two, *MIS Quarterly* (IF 4.731, ranked 1st by *JCR*) and the *Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association* (IF 3.979, ranked 2nd by *JCR*), appear within the top 25 journals considered by our survey respondents.

The authors who submit research papers to peer-reviewed journals were asked how many journal papers they had written in the past three years. The most common responses were two (16.7%), three (14.7%) and four (12.7%). In the past three years 61.5% of authors had published one to five articles, while 22.8% had published 6-10 articles and 12.2% had published more than 10 articles.

It seems that, for the most part, the authors in our survey averaged one to two peer-reviewed journal articles per year.

When asked how many peer-reviewed journal articles they had published overall in their careers, the responses seemed to be consistent with the number of years of research experience. That is, the most common responses were at the low and high ends of the scale with fewer responses in the middle. The most common responses were three articles (6.6%) and 30+ articles (6.6%). Overall, 32.2% had published 1-10 peer-reviewed articles in their careers, 22.3% had published 11-20 articles, 32.4% had published 21 or more articles in their careers and 13% did not respond.

**What Level of Access Do ASIS&T Members and Information Science Researchers Have to JASIST and Journal Literature in General?**

Overall, the respondents had very good access to journal literature. When asked, “How would you describe your current level of access to the journal literature?” 75.4% responded “good” or “excellent.” The most frequent response was “Good; I have access to most journals I need” with 45.1% of the total. This result was followed by 30.3% responding “Excellent; I have access to all the journals I need.” Only 4.8% rated their access level to journal literature as “poor” or “very poor.” The high level of access to journal literature in our sample group may be related to their professional careers in colleges and universities.

Of those surveyed 80.8% currently read *JASIST*. The most common frequency of use was every issue (33.6%), followed by one or two times a year (21.7%), every other month (17.4%), never (12.4%) and less than once a year (8.1%). A small number of users, 4.3%, responded “I would use it if I were able to access it easily.”

The respondents were also asked how they accessed *JASIST*. They were asked to indicate all the ways they accessed the journal. In these responses 62.8% used a membership subscription to read the journal in print or online while 42.5% indicated that they accessed the journal through a library or library service, such as interlibrary loan. The most common format used was electronic, with 60% indicating that they access the journal either through their library’s electronic license or through online member access. Among those surveyed, there did not seem to be problems accessing the journal.

**Are ASIS&T Members, Authors and the Information Science Community Aware of and/or Participating in the Open Access Movement?**

There was an overwhelming awareness of open access (OA) with 95.7% responding that they knew about open access journals. Of those, 60.4% knew “a lot” or “quite a lot” about OA. Only 4% responded that they knew nothing at all in regard to open access journals. Even though most of the respondents were aware of OA journals, the majority, 64.7%, had never published an article in one.

Overall, there was a positive attitude towards open access as evidenced by both the survey responses and comments. Respondents were asked to rate traits they associated with OA journals on a scale of 1-5, with 1 meaning that they “do not associate” the trait with OA and 5 meaning that they “very strongly associate” it with OA. Very few respondents thought of open access as “radical,” “ephemeral” or “not archived properly.” These qualities averaged 2.2, 2.5 and 2.3 respectively (or “associate a little”) on the scale. The concept of the “author pays to publish” was not associated with the concept of open access either. It rated an average of 2.3 or “associate a little” on the rating scale. This result is surprising since the *gold road*, or full open access model, often relies on author fees for publication.

At the end of the survey the respondents were asked if there were “any other thoughts or experiences they would like to share about the topics of this survey.” One hundred twenty-three people responded with further comments. Approximately 48% (59 responses) commented on open access specifically. These comments fell into three categories: people who were passionately in favor of OA, people who were hesitant about OA and people who liked the idea of OA but did not want publication fees. Many of the comments were strongly supportive of OA, asserting that “open access is no longer why or whether, but when and how” or “open access is vital for the future of publishing.” These comments often

pointed out the accessibility benefits of OA and the need for change and emphasized that scholarly societies should be leaders in the OA movement. There were also several respondents who were hesitant or skeptical about OA, and they provided comments such as, “I’m not sure that the rush to open access is so sensible” and “I am not yet persuaded that a viable economic model for open access can be sustained.” The third group was positive about the merits of OA, but was opposed to the idea of authors paying for publication. A typical comment in this group was, “I am strongly in favor of open access journals, but not if they charge substantial fees to authors.”

**Conclusion**

This survey gave ASIS&T the opportunity to answer four questions:

**Who are ASIS&T members, JASIST authors and information science researchers?**

We found that the face of information and library science is changing. Researchers from Asia, the Middle East and Africa are becoming more active in the discipline. Also, there are many researchers who are either beginning their careers or who have 21+ years of research

experience, with fewer researchers in between.

**What are the publication trends among these groups?**

Of those surveyed 68% submit articles to peer-reviewed journals. It appears that on average the authors in our sample group published one to two papers a year.

**What access levels do they have to journal literature in general and JASIST specifically?**

In answer to this question 75.4% of the respondents indicated that they had “good” or “excellent” access to journal literature and 80.8% read JASIST. The majority, 60%, accessed the journal on line either through their library’s institutional subscription or through a personal membership.

**Are they aware of and/or participating in the open access movement?**

There was an overwhelming awareness of open access with 95.7% of respondents indicating that they had at least some knowledge of open access journals. However, only 29.4% of authors had published in an open access journal.

This survey establishes a baseline for the further survey data we will solicit after the JASIST open access policy has been in place for a period of time. ■

Resources Cited in the Article

[1] Rowlands, I., & Nicholas, D. (2005, September 22). *New journal publishing models: An international survey of senior researchers: A CIBER report for the Publishers Association and the International Association of STM Publishers*. London: Centre for Information Behavior and the Evaluation of Research. Available April 17, 2008, from [www.homepages.ucl.ac.uk/~uczciro/pa\\_stm\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.homepages.ucl.ac.uk/~uczciro/pa_stm_final_report.pdf).

[2] Rowlands, I., Nicholas, D., & Huntington, P. (2004, March 18). *Scholarly communication in the digital environment: What do authors want?* London: Centre for Information Behavior and the Evaluation of Research. Available April 17, 2008, from [www.homepages.ucl.ac.uk/~uczciro/ciber-pa-report.pdf](http://www.homepages.ucl.ac.uk/~uczciro/ciber-pa-report.pdf).