

# Transportation Research Forum

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Dear readers:

As an academic editor and researcher, I would like to voice a personal opinion on the state of publishing and academic journals, an opinion that also reflects on the potential benefits of submitting your research to the Journal of the Transportation Research Forum (JTRF).

For a variety of reasons, I believe academic journals--at least in economics and business--are in a very strange place right now, with some emerging problems possibly attributable to COVID. To illustrate these problems, I'd like to relate some recent personal experiences I have had with my own research. To start, I've found that numerous referees and editors are acting far less sensibly (for lack of a better word) than historically has been the case. Just a few weeks ago I had a very detailed and well-received paper "desk rejected" by a major transportation journal, accompanied by a very short and incoherent explanation from an editor, within two hours after submitting it. Such promptness even in desk rejection was particularly shocking given the poorly expositied material that often appears in that journal (I'll give you 2 guesses as to which journal it was)! Nevertheless, I believe it highlights the increasing vagueness in editorial feedback provided to many authors today. And alternatively, other editors increasingly refuse to outright reject papers, but instead string authors along with smoky promises of success if they can meet the (likely excessive) demands of a referee.

Over the past few months, I have received several reviews (asking for revisions) of my work almost completely lacking in instructive editorial input. I don't recall seeing this consistent level of editorial disengagement before in my career. All of these personal observations suggest a plummeting level of editorial care and commitment in the major journals. Perhaps now there are just too many papers in circulation at the prominent peer-reviewed journals in our field. In any case, editorial service for authors seems far less personal or evenhanded than ever before. What is the remedy for this?

For better or worse, we do not have the latter problem at JTRF. The number of submissions remains modest so that I, as Editor, can give each one careful consideration, both before and after the submission receives reviews. And in spite of our currently disappointing submission numbers, JTRF remains in good standing with

Elsevier and its "parent" journal set, Research in Transportation Economics (RETREC). However, I fear this standing will not continue unless submissions increase by about half over the next two years. As part of a callout to our membership, I must remind you that RETREC remains very well ranked in the "RePEc" (Research Papers in Economic) journal database. I know JTRF will have a bright future as part of

RETREC – if we can get even more quality submissions across all sub-fields of transportation economics, business and policy.

In summary, I urge all TRF members and their peers to please consider the JTRF first for your better research output. Not only will you get more personalized “service” following your submission compared to most other transportation journals, but you will also, if the paper is ultimately accepted, be published in a highly respected and well-ranked journal in the field of transportation.

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Editor, Journal of the Transportation Research Forum