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# A Letter from the Editor

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I first want to express my gratitude to my predecessor Gérard Cachon. Gérard has done a truly remarkable job for *M&SOM* and provided extraordinary service to our community. He hands over a journal that is in superb health. His legacy entails broadening the journal to support emerging research areas of operations management (OM), including behavioral OM and empirical OM, a revitalization of the editorial board, now populated with a set of outstanding young scholars, and a best-in-class review process that provides timely reviews that are fair, critical, and constructive. Arguably *M&SOM* can now claim to be the premier journal dedicated to operations management. Indeed, in looking forward I do not see a lot to change and certainly very little to fix. The main challenges will be to sustain the very positive trajectory that the journal is now on and to increase its visibility and the awareness of all that has been accomplished by the journal.

In the remainder of this letter I will comment on why I agreed to be considered for the position of Editor, what I would like to accomplish, and how I would like to do this over the next three years. I will close with an overview of a few changes for the journal.

## Why

There were three compelling reasons for me to want to be Editor of *M&SOM*:

*Timing:* This seems like the right point in my career to assume such a position. Each of our careers evolves through a number of stages, requiring an occasional rebalancing of the portfolio of work and family commitments. For me this seemed like the right time to back off on some thrusts and to devote more time to service for my professional community.

*Honor:* It goes without saying that I am deeply honored to be asked. *M&SOM* is an extraordinarily valuable asset of the OM field. I regard the role of Editor

as being that of a steward: The Editor is responsible for protecting and enriching the asset for the good of the community, now and into the future. To be entrusted with this responsibility is humbling, and it is a signature honor for me to assume this position.

*Impact:* I believe that I can be a positive force in using the journal to help shape and influence the future of OM research. I would do this foremost through publication decisions and policies that maintain high standards and that establish the journal's "taste" for OM research. In addition, I believe that an equally important role for the Editor is to encourage and support both promising new research thrusts and promising young scholars, as these will determine the future for our field.

## What

We will continue to strive to make *M&SOM* the premier research journal dedicated to OM. By all measures the journal is in very good shape, and its reputation continues to strengthen. We will continue to take a quite broad view of OM in terms of topics and research disciplines; we are especially interested in papers that report relevant research on important problems.

In thinking about what I want to accomplish, I would cite three success factors. Namely in 10 to 15 years, we will have been successful if:

- *M&SOM* papers constitute a disproportionate share of the reading lists for the next generation of scholars, namely our doctoral students.
- The OM curriculum in both management and engineering schools is populated with concepts, principles, and models that originated in research first published in *M&SOM*.
- There is a generation of OM scholars who credit the journal with being instrumental in their success,

in terms of helping them to improve and disseminate their research.

If we are able to do this, then *M&SOM* will be the most prestigious outlet for OM research, not just for journals dedicated to OM, but across all journals. More and more, we will get a larger share of the best papers from the best researchers. I do believe we are on this path, but undoubtedly it will take more than one three-year editorial term for this to come to fruition.

## How

So how might we do this? I will briefly outline below two strategies.

*Operational Excellence:* To get the best papers, we need to continue to make sure that authors are well served.

One element is timely reviews. We will try to sustain the remarkable process put in place by my predecessor, with target review times of 63 days (9 weeks) and with very tight control on the tail of this distribution. Indeed, the most remarkable statistic is that nearly 100% of the reviews are completed within 90 days; we will strive to do the same.

The second element is to provide high-quality reviews that are critical, fair, and constructive. This is harder to measure, particularly given that a critical review unduly focuses on the shortcomings of one's research. Nevertheless, I do think the Editor and associate editors can work collectively to improve the quality of reviews by providing tactful feedback to the referees on the strong and weak points of their reviews. And we will continue to recognize reviewers, who consistently provide exceptional reviews, with Meritorious Service Awards.

Third we need to control the time between the acceptance of a paper and its publication in the journal. This is a classic problem of balancing demand and supply, which in theory we know how to do.

*High-Impact Papers:* The reputation of a journal depends heavily on its high-impact papers, e.g., the exceptional papers that solve important problems in innovative ways or that open new fields of research.

There is no set formula for finding special papers, but we can do things to increase the likelihood. A first step is to make sure that the authors are well served, as discussed above.

In addition, the Editor should be ready to encourage and support unconventional papers that have promise but that might easily be killed by referees. An important role for the Editor is to take some calculated risks with papers with an uncertain but potentially high upside.

Third, the journal should encourage and invest in emerging research themes, e.g., OM in the life sciences and in health care, OM and sustainability, OM and globalization. We can do this by soliciting papers as well as choices for the editorial board. Another vehicle for finding these special papers is with special issues. The success of a special issue depends on getting the right people to edit on the right topic at the right time. I will proactively work with the editorial board to develop candidate themes for such endeavors and am open to ideas from the community.

Similarly I would want to encourage more OM Forum and OM Survey papers. The challenge is the same as noted for special issues. Working with the board, I would seek ideas for OM Forum pieces from senior OM scholars, as well as ideas for survey papers. Such papers can have an enormous influence on the profession and in the classroom.

## Operational Changes

Beyond the aspirations described above, I have introduced a few operational changes. As previously noted, much stays the same, given how well the journal is functioning, but I do think there are a few opportunities for refinement and improvement.

First is to have an explicit [conflict-of-interest](#) policy, which is posted on the journal's website. Briefly, there is a potential conflict of interest when an editor or associate editor handles a paper from a coauthor, or a former student, or a departmental colleague; in such situations, we will reassign the paper to another editor or associate editor, so as to avoid the potential conflict of interest.

Second is to have page limits for submissions. Due to the success of the journal we now have an increase in both submissions and accepted papers. Even with a substantial increase in our page budget, it will take over one year to publish the current backlog of accepted papers. We will continue to ask for more pages to print, but at the same time I want to have more control over the length of our papers. Hence, we

will have a limit of 32 pages for all submissions; the details are specified in the [submission instructions](#) on the Web page.

I also have set a page limit on the online supplement, which has become increasingly popular with our authors. Here the issue is to gain some control over what we ask of our referees. Given that we do publish the online supplement, we need for the referees to review it just as carefully as they review the original manuscript. I think it is too much to ask a referee to review a (say) 32-page manuscript plus its (say) 25-page technical supplement within five weeks. Hence, we will have a limit of eight pages for the online supplement; the details are specified in the [submission instructions](#) on the Web page.

Finally, I have eliminated two special categories for submissions: OM Practice papers and Notes. In both cases I do not believe it is necessary to have such a designation.

The journal remains extremely interested in “OM practice” papers. Indeed, I would like to increase significantly the number of papers that report on innovative implementations of OM research to real problems or that rigorously document existing practice and demonstrate how current modeling approaches succeed or fail in practice. I believe that our field is in desperate need of such work.

Nevertheless, my expectation is that for publication these papers should make contributions of archival quality. As a consequence, the review process for such papers is essentially the same as for a regular manuscript. The criteria for publication are: importance of the problem, issue or phenomenon to the OM research community, relevance of the research to addressing the problem or understanding the phenomenon, rigor and novelty of the work, and quality of exposition. Hence there is no need to segregate these papers from the normal flow of manuscripts.

Similarly, we remain very receptive to short papers that make important contributions, and will use the same review process as for a longer paper. Yet, in judging all submissions a critical point of assessment is the contribution relative to the length of the manuscript. Given this policy, there seems no reason to designate short papers as “Notes.”

In closing, I am extremely honored to be the Editor of *M&SOM*. The journal is doing very well and is in great shape. My goals are to continue to strengthen the journal and to enhance its reputation. I also hope that we can use the journal to influence in a positive way the direction of the OM field. I know there is hard work ahead, but I look forward to working with the OM research community in this endeavor.