Where the journal is today

As *Age and Ageing* celebrates its 40th anniversary, we can be justifiably proud of its reputation as one of the leading scientific journals dealing with Geriatric Medicine. We have growing subscriptions and rapidly increasing online usage. The number of submissions has risen over the past decade, but we have striven to reduce turnaround time year on year, so that our authors can see their paper published and subscribers read the resulting articles as soon as possible.

Turnaround times

Over the last 10 years we have seen a dramatic drop in the turnaround times, due mainly to adoption of Manuscript Central in 2003 to manage peer review online, but also to other improvements in systems and processes.

The figure below shows the reduction in mean and median turnaround time in days, but it should be noted that the range is very wide, as some papers may require more than 200 days to complete the peer review process. These figures are also skewed by our high outright rejection rate, with about 60% of papers being rejected without peer review, usually within a week of submission.

Submissions by Country of Origin

We are increasingly an international journal, as reflected by the growing number of submissions from outside the UK and our more diverse global readership.

Figure shows numbers of submissions by country of origin in 2011.

Acceptance and rejection rates

The increase in the number of papers submitted to *Age and Ageing* has necessitated a rigorous approach to the use of external peer review and to ultimate acceptance for publication. We have therefore increased the proportion of unsuitable papers rejected outright without formal peer review. Although outright rejection may be disappointing to the
authors, it avoids placing an unnecessary burden on our Reviewers and Associate Editors. Furthermore, sending a poor quality paper for peer review does little to enhance the reputation of the journal.

Our current acceptance rate is 20%, down from 24%, where it has hovered for the past 10 years. However, the steady increase in the number of high quality submissions has necessitated an increase our annual page budget from 576 in 2002 to 816 pages this year.

**Impact Factor**

Although citation analysis has its limitations, it is increasingly important to potential authors and therefore to the quality of papers submitted to the journal in the future. The impact factor is the number of citations in any given year to a journal’s papers published in the previous two years, divided by the total number of citable articles over that two year period. Our current Impact Factor is 3.090 and is following a general upwards trend. *Age and Ageing* also competes well with other journals in the geriatric and gerontology category—which now number 44 journals compared with 24 in 2001. We currently rank 13th out of 44, but it is worth noting that among the clinical journals in Geriatric Medicine, we are only second behind the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.

**Subscriptions and Online Usage**

Subscriptions to *Age and Ageing* grow steadily, but these days we are also interested in how often articles are downloaded. The journal enjoys very high online usage of about 80,000-100,000 downloads a month, together with a geographically diverse readership.

This wide usage of our content will in part be due to consortia subscription, where readers of *Age and Ageing* have access through their institution.

*Age and Ageing* benefits from Oxford University Press’s initiative to provide free and reduced online subscriptions to developing countries. This represents about a quarter of our subscriptions and ensures that our papers are accessible to institutions in low-income countries.

We have a Green Open Access policy and through Oxford Open offer authors the option of making their paper immediately publically available by publishing their
paper open access. In addition we allocate one paper per issue to be freely accessible. However all our papers can be self archived after 12 months and accessed in online repositories such as PubMedCentral.

**Summary**

As we produce the final issue of our 40th volume of the journal, we can afford to feel optimistic about the future. Whatever metric you choose to measure a journal’s success; Impact Factor, size of readership, quantity and quality of submissions, we are moving in the right direction.

This year saw the journal and British Geriatrics Society embrace new publishing platforms in social media and we are keeping pace not just with innovations in technology but in shifts in publishing policy and new challenges in publication ethics. *Age and Ageing* proves that it can change with the times, but one constant we will always maintain is to publish the best quality, peer reviewed research. Whatever the future may hold, that will stand us in good stead!

Ms Katy Ladbrook

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On the following pages, we have reproduced the most cited and downloaded papers ever published in the journal. The most cited paper is ‘Evaluation of a mental test score for assessment of mental impairment in the elderly’ by Malcolm Hodkinson, whereas the most downloaded paper is the review entitled ‘The clock-drawing test’ by Berit Agrell and Ove Dehlin. Hopefully, these will be of interest to older readers who may nostalgically remember the original publications, but also to younger clinicians in Geriatric Medicine who are aware of these instruments, without knowing about the history of their development! [When citing these papers please use the citation from the original publication, and not the citation from this supplement.]