Publishing in journals: editor's and referee's responsibilities

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What do editors do?

- Editor has an initial skim read; decides whether to send paper to referees or screen/desk reject
  - screen reject is efficient and saves you wasting time
  - if you don't ever get screen rejected you're probably not aiming high enough
- What criteria will the Editor use?
  - Importance of research question
    - who will want to read it? how does that compare to the readership of the journal?
  - Clear presentation, well organised
    - is it easy to read and understand?
  - Novelty of your contribution

Journal of Political Economy

INFORMATION ON TURNAROUND TIMES

JPE Turnaround Times, Previous Two Years

	Outcome of 1st Round Decisions	Mean Days to Decision	Median Days to Decision	Decision Later than Six Months after Submission (as percentage of decisions within decision type)
Desk Rejection	53%	10	7	0%
Reject with Reviews	40%	128	95	19%
Revise	8%	189	164	41%

Average time from original submission to acceptance (omitting time with author in revision) = 446 days

ROYAL ECONOMIC SOCIETY

Economic Journal 2018 Annual Report

Table 1: Submissions and decisions

Submissions (All Submissions; First, Second, etc.)					Of Regular Submissions (All Submissions; First, Second, etc.)							
Year	Total	Submitted Regular	Submitted Features	Submitted Conference	Accepted	Conditionally Accepted	Returned for Revision	Rejected	Summarily Rejected	Pending	Withdrawn / To be Removed	Total
2018	1770	1768	0	2	79	32	94	384	956	223	2	1770
2017	1676	1629	3	43	83	26	115	347	884	173	1	1629
2016*	1215	1145	5	65	73	33	54	212	614	156	3	1145
2015	1529	1372	76	81	92	49	135	370	725	0	1	1372
2014	1428	1251	86	91	93	44	136	353	624	0	1	1251
2013	1301	1136	74	91	58	34	132	407	501	0	4	1136
2012	1196	1067	61	68	49	22	117	371	505	0	3	1067

Report of the editors of JEEA 2017 to the Ex Comm

TABLE 2: TURNAROUND STATISTICS FOR NEW SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED BETWEEN JANUARY 1, 2017 AND DECEMBER 31,2017 (comparison with 2016 and 2015)

	2017		2016		2015	
	# Submissions	Days to 1st decision	# Submissions	Days to 1st decision	# Submissions	Days to 1st decision
Summarily rejected	470	9	353	10	263	6
Rejected	417	88	454	91	446	83
Revise-and-Resubmit	49	178	63	145	53	138
Accepted/Cond. Accepted	17	87	13	119	27	99
Pending			3		0	
Withdrawn	4		4		9	
TOTAL (excluding pending)	953	45	884	63	789	62

What do editors do?

- If paper sent to reviewers
  - sent to between 1-4 referees, their expertise will depend on the journal, the Editor, how you've positioned the paper
- Referees take between 1-6 months to return review; Editor takes between 1-5 months to reach a decision:
  - reject
  - revise and resubmit
  - accept or accept with revisions

How to respond to an editor if they offer R&R

- Read through referee reports
  - put them down and walk away for a day or two (or longer) before you do anything
- Go through **all** comments
  - make a plan for how to respond
  - consider which are most important and spend most time on them
  - pay particular attention to the Editor's letter
- Draft a detailed response
  - respond to each individual point, lay out your response clearly
- Never (or very rarely) complain to the Editor

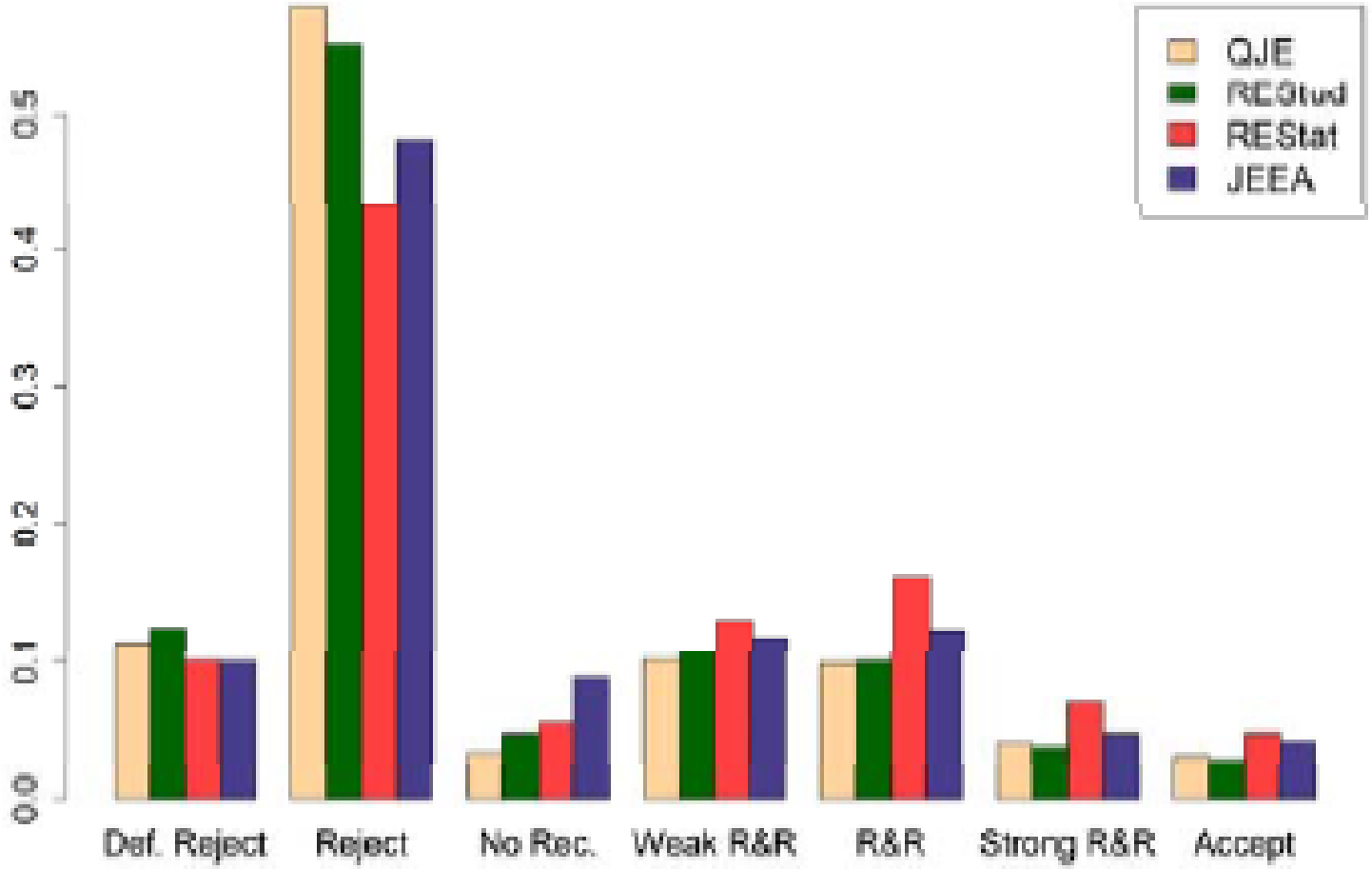
How to be a good referee

- You should should write referee reports if you can get it done in time and do it (reasonably) well
  - it is a contribution to the public good
  - editors notice good (and bad) referee reports
  - you usually learn from the process of writing a referee report and it helps make your papers better
- What to do when you get a request
  - scan the paper; read the abstract, introduction, conclusion
  - respond immediately saying you can not do a report if: you have a conflict of interest, you do not feel competent, you know you will be too busy to deliver
  - if you decline suggest alternative referees if you can

How to be a good referee

- You need to take a view on
  - does the paper address an interesting question?
  - does it make an important contribution to the literature?
  - is the analysis well executed? are there any mistakes?
  - is the paper well written? is it easy to read and understand?
- Your job is to advise the editor
  - make a clear recommendation, but it is the editor's decision whether to publish
  - if you think the paper is clearly not acceptable then write a short report quickly stating why (it does not have to be comprehensive), the editor and authors will appreciate the quick response
- Your reports for the authors should be constructive
  - judge the paper on its merits, don't rewrite the paper according to your tastes, it is the authors' paper, not yours

Referee recommendations



Source: Card and DellaVigna (2019) “What do Editors Maximize? Evidence from Four Economics Journals”