

Report of the Vice President for Publications, July 2011

The reports of the Executive Editor of the *System Dynamics Review* and the publisher Wiley-Blackwell contain important information and data on the state of the journal in our field. I would refer you to those reports for operational detail. This brief report reflects on issues and concerns raised there.

In both of those reports, the apparently declining impact factor of the *Review* raises serious concerns for the Publication Committee and the Society. The impact factor is the ratio of cites to articles in a given period divided by the number of articles in that period. An impact factor of 0.667 (our current one-year ratio) means, on average about two cites for every three articles. Our current five-year ratio is 1.01 (WB) or 1.56 (EE). Much like a stock price, it is a *gross* indicator of the “presence” of the journal in the academic marketplace, and is frequently used as a proxy for quality. Our impact factors suggest we have a relatively low presence, and that influences our attractiveness as a publication outlet, creating a powerful reinforcing feedback loop that is currently working against us.

Put somewhat crudely but I think not totally inaccurately, the *Review* is not publishing enough articles that people want to cite, or know about enough to cite. To improve our impact factor, we have to publish more articles that more people want to cite, and we have to improve on the wider visibility of articles in the *Review*.

Like a stock price, the impact factor does not tell us what to do. There are a host of issues and processes implicit in the previous statements, which the current editorial and publication structures of the *Review* work hard on. The Publications Committee will work on these as well, collaboratively as a resource for the Executive Editor, the entire editorial staff, and our colleagues at Wiley-Blackwell.

But the biggest issue facing the Vice President for Publications, and in an advisory role the Publications Committee, is the successor to Brian Dangerfield. Brian had intuitively planned on about a ten-year stay as Executive Editor, and that period has now come to a close, so he is considering stepping down. He and I are talking about timing, and I’m working with the Publications Committee and others on thinking about his successor.

With a new Executive Editor may come demands and opportunities to rethink the editorial structure of the *Review*, and perhaps tweek aspects of the very design of the journal. A new editor may wish to see different roles and responsibilities for the Associate Editors. The Publications Committee will be very active in helping to think through such possible changes. Furthermore, the framework of Main Articles, Notes and Insights, and Research Problems has served us well, but some are wondering if it’s time for a revised structure. The Publications Committee will think hard with Brian and the new editor about smart structural revisions and continuations.

George P. Richardson
Vice President for Publications