System Dynamics Review

Executive Editor Report to SDS Policy Council
Prepared by Rogelio Oliva
January, 2013

This report is structured in four sections and represents the summary of activities since the mid-year report in June 2012.

1. **Publication Status**
   1.1. Publication of Volume 28 (2012) has progressed in time. The last two issues came out on time, and each with four research papers.
   1.2. Issue 29.1 will be delayed (estimated at one month) because of lack of copy. Over the last two years we increased page count in our contact with Wiley, changed the journal layout allowing us to put more papers out per issue, and a change in the submission guidelines that is requiring some adjustments from the authors. All these changes suggest a new required equilibrium for the original submissions for the journal, but I'm happy to report that submissions numbers and their quality are slowly improving. I expect this delay to be only temporary and the rest of the issues of volume 29 should come out close to their original schedule.
   1.3. In January 2013 we 'published' the first **virtual** issue (a group of already-published papers on the same topic) of the SDR. David Ford and Jim Lyneis edited an issue on *Applications of System Dynamics to Project Management.* Since our journal has such an eclectic audience, and we all enter the journal from different angles, I believe these special issues will have an effective impact on readability. Furthermore, virtual issues would be a good entry point for novices into our journal.
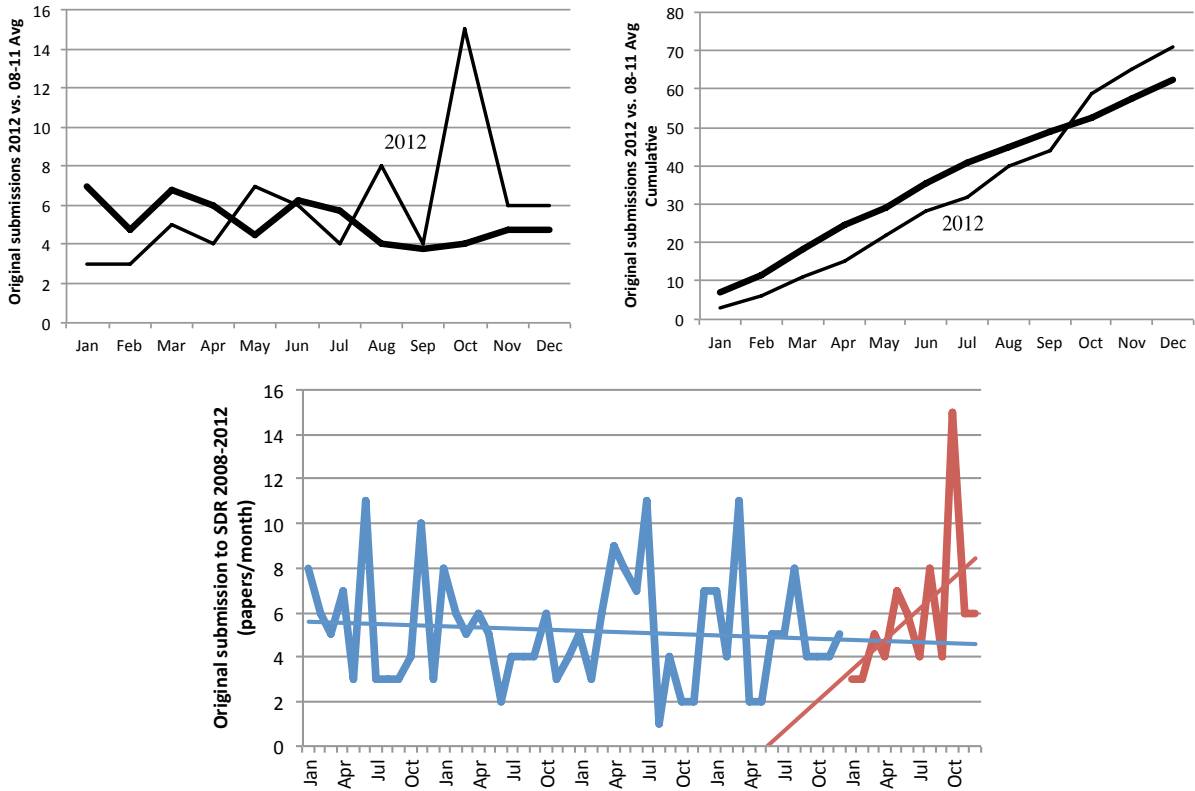
2. **Reviewing Performance**
   2.1. We dealt with the existing review backlog.
   From 34 manuscripts that were in the system (either with reviewers or with authors) on 01Jan12, we are now down to 5 manuscripts with authors and 10 manuscripts in the review process, representing a 56% drop of the existing review backlog. Given the steady state submission rate and the review times, it is unlikely that the backlog can be reduced any further (it has hovered around that level since the summer of 2012).

   2.2. We have much faster review times.
   The maximum, average and median submission-to-decision times for submissions made during 2012 (original and revisions) have improved, respectively, by 61% and 74% and 92% from last year.
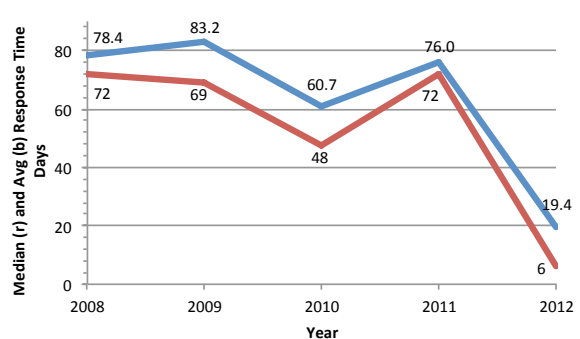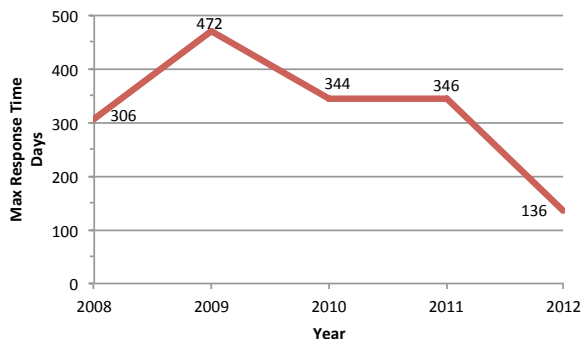
2.3. This improvement in customer service has resulted on a higher submission rate, reversing the downward trend that we had over the last four years.


2.4. Most of the improvements of the review process have emerged from stricter criteria (including new documentation guidelines) before papers are sent out to reviewers.
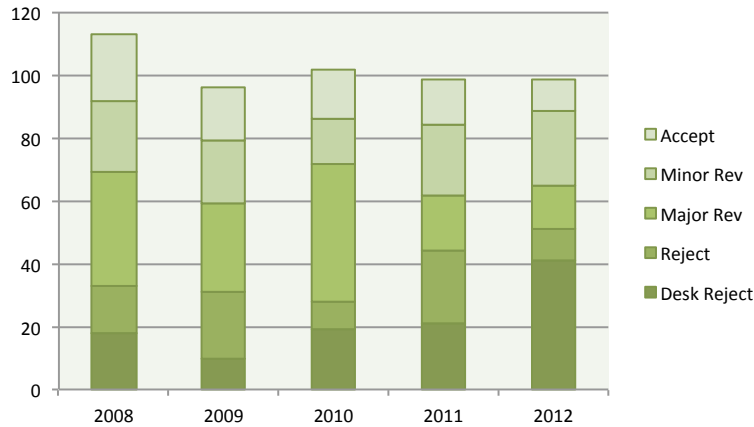

3. **Journal Performance**

3.1. We have a self-citation fraction that is much lower than the average for specialized journals (see left graph). An unexpected benefit of faster reviews and shorter time to publication, is the fact that we are increasing the number of our citations that count towards our two year impact factor. The blue line on the graph on the right shows the number of citations in a

year to the articles published in the previous two years, the red line is the reported impact factor. I have good reasons to expect our impact factor to be above one for 2012 (not reported until June 2013).
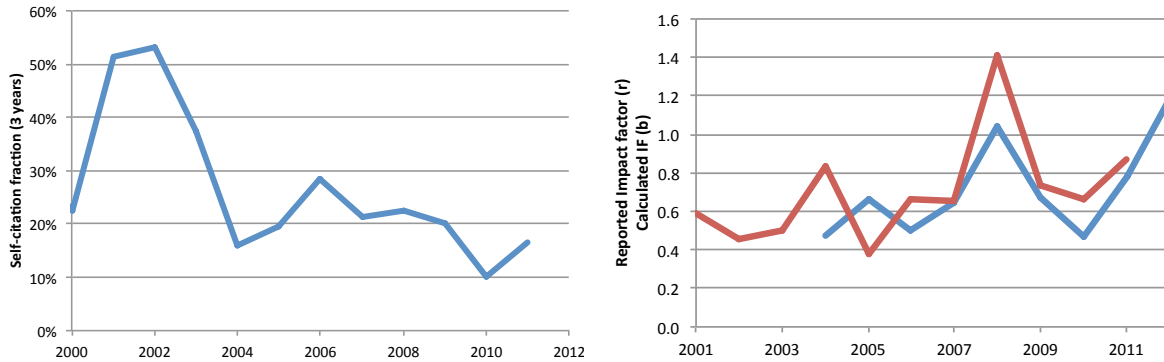
3.2. It is not possible to assess an acceptance ratio that was representative over a time frame since some of the decisions are taken months after the paper was submitted. A 'steady state' approximation is to consider the number of accepted papers in a year divided by the number of original submissions in that year. The fact that no papers have been accepted for issue 29.1, the stricter acceptance standards, and the higher submission rate yields a slightly lower than expected acceptance fraction for 2012.
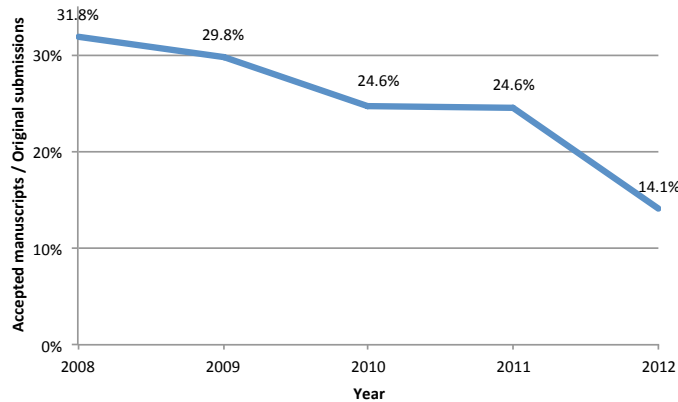
4. **Future Plans**

    4.1. I'm working with the Society's SIGs for each to develop their own virtual issue.

    4.2. I plan to develop guidelines and policies for potential conflict of interest issues among authors, reviewers, and editors.

    4.3. Up to this date all my efforts have been concentrated in improving the speed and outcomes of review process. Very little has been done to improve the journal's ability to attract interesting papers to the community. I plan to engage the Associate Editors in this important role.

    4.4. I would like to figure out a better way to get a handle on our reviewers. It is not clear to me whether we are fully utilizing our reviewers' talents and whether we are 'abusing' the generosity of some of our reviewers.