

System Dynamics Review

Executive Editor Report to SDS Policy Council

January, 2018

This is my second yearly (2017) report to System Dynamics Society since I became Executive Editor of SDR in January 2016. In this report I will summarize the current state of SDR, the main challenges, the major activities/ developments, and future outlook.

1- The 2017 Volume (33)

Our 'showcase' SDR issue in 2016-2017 was the final double issue of 2016 (released in May 2017) in memory of Jay W. Forrester. The issue had Forrester's image on the cover, seven main articles including Jay's most recent article as an archive, the obituary, and my editorial.

But unfortunately, the problem of delayed issues continued in 2017. The first issue of 2017 was published six months late. The second issue is released just a few days ago (i.e. again six months late). We expect to release issues 3 and 4 of 2017 by the end of March and May 2018 respectively. The first two issues of 2018 – the double special issue of 60th anniversary of the field- is expected to be published in June-July 2018. It means that in the second half of 2018, we can finally be on schedule.

Delayed publication of SDR issues has been a problem for many years, but particularly more pronounced in the last few years. The root cause of the problem is a low rate of high quality paper submission. In general, we have almost zero backlog of accepted papers (except the ones to be used in the immediate issue). This was the case when I took over in January 2016. We have not been able to build up a backlog of papers since then. Although there has been a mild yet consistent increase in paper inflow (in quantity and quality) in the past nine months, it has not been enough to solve our backlog and delay problems. Moreover, in 2016 the delay problem had become even worse due to several transition problems. (The entire Wiley-SDR and Production team also changed coincidentally when I took over as EE). I will discuss this problem and our interactions with Wiley under item (3) below.

As for the contents: our issues typically have three main articles and a short note, plus an occasional editorial, an award citation, or book review. These numbers are not good enough. Our short-term goal is to increase the average number of articles per issue up to 5-6, and then up to 8 in the long term.

2- Current paper backlog and submissions

We have the following paper backlog (stocks) in different categories:

3 accepted (which means we can produce the next SDR issue with one more acceptance).

18 with authors awaiting revision

4 waiting for review reports and scores

2 awaiting ME (or RE) decision

2 awaiting EE decision

2 awaiting EE assignment/decision (ie. just submitted)

Of the above papers, a total of 10 (8 under revision and two awaiting Guest Editor decision) are for the 60th anniversary special issue. The two papers awaiting guest editor decision are quite close to acceptance stage, so if 5-6 of the papers under revision turn out solid revised papers in a couple of months, we would be able to compile the 60th anniversary issue in June-July 2018. Before then, we should also be able to complete the remaining two regular issues of 2017. This means that by July 2018, we will finally be back in our regular schedule. If the current healthier level of paper inflow continues, we should then be able to produce all issues on time in the second half of 2018 and onwards.

The submission rate has clearly improved in 2017 as seen in the following table

(Based on all manuscripts whose submission date is between Jan 1, 2017 and Jan 1, 2018):

Manuscript Type	Original	Revised	Total
Book Review	1	1	2
Main Article	77	12	89
Notes and Insights	6	7	13
Research Article	0	20	20
Total	84	40	124

The original (initial) submission rate (84) in 2017 is well above the average yearly submission rate for the past five years (about 60), and higher than all five individual years. 23 of 84 original submissions were for the 60th anniversary issue. So even with the extreme approach of discarding all special issue submissions, the 2017 submission rate was at the historic average.

Our acceptance rate for 2017 has been about 20%, neither too high, nor too low compared to our recent past acceptance rates.

Our review/decision times continue to be good: Average times from submission to decision are:

58 days for main/research articles

34 days for short notes and insights

Please note that the above numbers are worse than last years' (40 and 32), but 2016 and 2017 are not quite comparable because of 23 articles handled by special issue guest editors. Guest editors preferred to batch all submissions and make all decisions in one month, about six months after first submissions (rather than first making easy reject or accept/minor revision decisions in a few days or weeks). The resulting average decision time of guest editors (190 days) inflated our average decision time in 2017. Considering this fact, our decision times in 2017 can still be considered good.

3- Relationships with Wiley

The problems we have had with Wiley's production team and processes unfortunately continued, and in some dimensions have become even worse in 2017. The main problems are of two types: i- very long production delays (for instance an issue being published 90 days after the acceptance of all articles), and ii- too many trivial production errors (article, editor, date information, table and figure format errors...) that kept recurring over and over again in spite of my repetitive corrections. I do not want to bombard you with more details and I know that as an EE my job is not to complain. I am writing this only to give a proper background and state the fact that a significant time and effort of mine was spent (wasted) on discussing and trying to fix trivial but repetitive problems in the production process.

A good piece of news is that Wiley managers (in production process and in Oxford office) have recently become more responsive to my requests. So they took some concrete structural steps just in these last couple of weeks: i- they offered to add a new 'assistant editor' to the SDR team, ii- they replaced the typesetter with a more experienced one, iii- they offered to replace our Production Editor with a more experience editor. I have already seen some concrete and prompt actions/results in recent days. I hope that we will finally leave these production and communication problems and delays behind in 2018 and I/we can dedicate much more time to article recruitment and activities related to improving the content and editorial processes of SDR.

You can read more about our interactions with Wiley and the strategy meeting we had in Oxford in March 2017 in the VP Publications report by Pål I. Davidsen. Let me simply remind that in midst of the above problems, we also happen to be in a contract decision/renewal year with Wiley. Wiley naturally made an

offer and I am currently discussing with them some items directly related to SDR. Being a contract decision year, 2018 may be a good opportunity to obtain some improved/extra services from Wiley. We plan to have our next strategy meeting with Wiley in April 2018 (hopefully together with our new VP publications Krys Stave and Roberta Spencer), right before we will have to make our contract decision.

4- Editorial changes, other developments and outlook

Early in 2017, we tried to strengthen our Editorial Board by adding new AEs with diverse backgrounds:

- David N. Ford, Texas A&M University, USA
- Burak Güneralp, Texas A&M University, USA
- Birgit Kopainsky, University of Bergen, Norway
- Martin Kunc, University of Warwick, UK
- Gönenç Yücel, Boğaziçi University, Turkey

One of our existing associate editors, David Wheat stepped down in 2017. I would like to thank David for the valuable work he has done for SDR for many years, and our new AEs for agreeing to serve. I again want to emphasize that our primary workforce for paper recruitment is Associate Editors. Our current AE board has 19 members, which is a nearly 100% increase from its size two years ago (of 10) when I assumed the position. With a rich AE board, we should also expect our peer-review processes to improve –in promptness and in quality.

The other major and most recent development is that two of our existing Managing Editors, Laura Black and Andreas Größler expressed their wish to step down at the end of 2017. Laura and Andreas kindly agreed to see a couple of papers they already had on them to completion. They also agreed to continue to help SDR as associate editors. I thank Laura and Andreas for the hard and high quality job they have done for SDR for many years.

To replace Laura and Andreas, I invited two experienced members from our associate editors team with strong and unique qualifications: Jim Duggan from National University of Ireland and Shayne Gary from University of New South Wales. I thank Jim and Shayne for agreeing to serve as our new Managing Editors and look forward to work with them for a continuously improving SDR.

Management of ‘Short Note & Insight’ papers has been an issue we have discussed for many years. Ignacio Martinez-Moyano has been recently serving as our Editor for SN&I. I decided recently that rather than dedicating an Editor to SN&I papers, it would be more effective to assign all papers to all Managing Editors, depending on the nature of the paper and the expertise of Managing Editors. I discussed the idea with Ignacio and he agreed. So, we now have a Managing Editors board (up to five from four in size) including Ignacio. I thank Ignacio for the great work he has done for SDR as a SN&I Editor and look forward to his services as a full Managing Editor.

We took several actions in S1/mc system and in our editorial procedures to improve SDR paper management. We reduced the maximum time allowed to reviewers down to 4 weeks. I updated and revised the ‘Managing editor user guide.’ I have recently revised and simplified our author guidelines and plan to post it soon at SDR website. We have been working with Wiley to promote SDR in a variety of media, including conferences, print media, web sites and social media. We plan to increase the intensity of these activities in 2018.

To summarize and conclude, 2017 has been difficult, our problems continued. But there is also enough evidence (activities and trends) to suggest that SDR will be in a much better shape in 2018 and beyond.

Respectfully,

Yaman Barlas,
Istanbul, January 2017