
Editorial

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The first two issues of *OR Insight* to be published by Palgrave Macmillan have been well received with favourable comments on its professionalism and range. In this issue, the articles are diverse in their areas of application, spanning healthcare redesign, newspaper supply chains, art tourism promotion and the quantification of environmental benefits in transport.

Fraser McLeod and Tom Cherrett provide quantitative insights into the mileage and emission reductions that are possible using a local facility as a collection and delivery point for small parcels rather than a courier's own depot. David Bamford and coauthors demonstrate how improvement techniques can focus efforts to improve the performance of the logistical assets of a provider of community healthcare in a socially deprived area. David Smith reports on how OR methodology has contributed to the decision-making processes associated with 'Open Studio' events where diverse artists collaborate to open their studios, or present exhibitions, simultaneously, over a small region. Finally, Gary Graham and John Hill's research shows that regional newspapers are adapting to use the Internet to develop new content and distribution relationships with consumers.

In our first editorial, two issues ago, we emphasised that *OR Insight* should appeal not only to practitioners and consultants. It should also cater for anyone wanting to learn more about the scope of OR, including reviews from a practice perspective and articles on developments in OR and associated disciplines. In particular, we asked for submissions that describe the impact of OR interventions, with corresponding lessons and insights.

Such submissions need the right mix of case-based analysis, reflection and rigour. Excellent articles from academics with extensive practical experience often tend towards the conventional style of journal article. Since our main criteria for publishing an article is its readability, relevance and interest to managers and OR practitioners, this editorial reflects on what constitutes a suitable article for *OR Insight*.

Academics will recall how long it took them to develop their research writing skills, helped by a supervisor and referees. The structure of an article needs to be planned, ensuring that the essential message is well communicated in the abstract, introduction and conclusions, making clear the aims and main research questions, providing the supporting evidence and analytical rigour.



Then comes the feedback from referees, mostly fair and helpful, that results in a better article. A lot of sweat, but worth it to get published, gain recognition and pursue a research career.

Many OR practitioners do not go down this path and instead develop presentation and report writing skills. Their broad objectives are still similar to those of academics, but with more emphasis on the message, benefits and maybe the key evidence. Reports are typically analytical, but not always reflective. An appendix or CD might contain the finer points and technical details, just the things that often most interest an academic, particularly ones at the start of their career.

Articles for *OR Insight* should aim to be about halfway between these two contrasting styles, reaping the good points of both, that is, good structure, clear phrasing, conciseness, readability, evidence-based, insightful, often reflective, sometimes provocative, even occasionally evangelistic. A literature review will be short and refer only to essential, directly relevant articles with readily accessible references (that is, not hard-to-obtain conference proceedings or reports). Review articles should be cited whenever possible as an alternative to multiple references. A checklist of questions might include the following. Does the article read and flow well so as to hold attention? Could you read it on a plane or train, as you might do with a special report in *The Economist*? Can the article be reduced in size without sacrificing content and message? Are examples required to illustrate a concept? Can any maths be put in an appendix or referenced externally, for example, through a website?

In return, referees for *OR Insight* should not be overly harsh with submissions from non-academics. Criticism can always be constructive, helping authors to improve an article if it is essentially worthwhile and publishable, with advice on how to repair it. We will firm up such referee guidance in the future.

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