



## Editorial

## History and growth of Journal of Process Control



## 1. Overview

The *Journal of Process Control* (*JPC*) celebrated its twenty fifth birthday in 2016. Since its inauguration in 1991 four people have served in the capacity of Editor in Chief. These people are John Perkins (1991–1996), Thomas McAvoy (1997–2008), Wolfgang Marquardt (2009–2014), and Denis Dochain (2015–present). This article gives an overview of the history and growth of *JPC* from its beginning to the present. It is organized into the time periods during which each Editor in Chief served, and it highlights the growth and accomplishments during their time of service.

## 2. 1991–1996 Editor in Chief John Perkins

When staff from Butterworths-Heinemann (B-H) approached me in late 1990 with an invitation to act as Chief Editor of a new journal they were planning, two questions fairly quickly came to me:

- Was a new journal, adding to the proliferation of vehicles for the publication of research results, really needed?
- Why was I a good choice to be the inaugural Chief Editor?

After an immediate knee-jerk negative reaction to the proposal, on reflection it did seem to me that a *Journal of Process Control* would be a good idea, providing a vehicle to our community not provided elsewhere. I rehearsed my arguments for this in the Editorial published in the first edition in 1991. A new journal focusing on the application of control technology (in its broadest sense) to the process industries would, on the one hand, encourage further application of advanced control in our industries, at a time of increasing industrial interest and activity, and on the other provide the research and development community with a single high-quality source of material relevant to their interests.

As to my second question, B-H assured me that they had consulted widely before making their choice. They were also keen to have a UK-based Chief Editor in the first instance, which of course narrowed the field rather! I had comparatively recently returned from Australia, where I had led, with Tom Marlin, the Warren Centre's project on Advanced Process Control, a major undertaking involving some 50 Australian engineers looking at the benefits of improved control systems on a wide variety of process plant. I was also about to take on the Directorship of the Interdisciplinary

Research Centre (IRC) for Process Systems Engineering, in succession to Professor Roger Sargent. On reflection, it seemed to me that I might be reasonably well qualified after all to take on the task.

The gestation of the journal was greatly helped by assembling a truly outstanding and international Editorial Board, and in particular by recruiting the three inaugural Regional Editors, Dieter Gilles for Europe, Iori Hashimoto for Asia-Pacific, and Tom McAvoy for the Americas. These good people shared the vision of a journal of the highest quality focusing on applications, and bore the brunt of the editorial work needed to ensure that this vision was realised. When looking at the progress in the development of the journal in 1993, two years into its life, it was gratifying to discover that 60% of the readership of *JPC* was based in industry, an encouraging sign of the potential relevance of the journal to industrial practice.

In 1997, a survey was published on the types of papers being published in *JPC* as well as from which geographical regions papers were being submitted. The survey covered 1995 and 1996. This survey mirrored two earlier surveys done in 1993 (covering 1991 and 1992) and 1995 (covering 1994 and 1995). The breakdown in terms of regions was North America 45%, Europe 30% and Asia-Pacific 25%. This distribution had remained relatively steady between the 1993 and 1997 surveys. The 1997 survey gives the types of papers being published and their trends as: applications constant at 41%, design methods 7%, techniques/algorithms increased to 36%, modeling/simulation shrunk to 6%, and monitoring strongly increased to 10%. In the 1993 survey there was almost no papers on monitoring. It was noted in 1997 that more papers on plant-wide control and more papers from industry were needed, and this was the same as noted in 1993.

In 1996, I was asked by Imperial College to take on the headship of the Chemical Engineering Department there, as well as continuing to be Director of the IRC. This increase in responsibility forced me to reassess my other commitments. Reluctantly, I concluded that it was time to hand on the mantle of being Chief Editor to someone else, and fortunately Tom McAvoy was prepared to take on the role.

During my time as Chief Editor, we saw the Journal grow in status, and make good progress towards the vision of being the top journal focused on process control. These achievements were very much a team effort, with the Editorial Board and the publishers' staff playing key roles. We should all be very grateful to them for the work they did to ensure the success of the *Journal of Process Control*.

### 3. 1997–2008 Editor in Chief Thomas McAvoy

In 1997, the Journal adopted a policy of rotating the members of its Editorial Board. These members were listed as Associate Editors, and they served for a term of 3 years. Over the years the very top people in the process control field have served on JPC's Editorial Board. In addition to shaping Journal policy, one of the key duties of Associate Editors involved helping with the review process in order to speed it up with goal of shrinking time to publication to a minimum. On some occasions, it was necessary to get a fast review of a manuscript, and the Associate Editors were called on to respond quickly. On other occasions, referees might have completely different opinions on a manuscript. In order to speed up the publication process in such cases, the manuscript was sent to an Associate Editor for an additional, timely review.

In 1999, the Journal established a Best Referee Award to recognize the important contribution made to JPC by its referees. This annual award was given to the referee who had turned in the best review of a manuscript over the preceding calendar year. Criteria for judging reviews were thoroughness, clarity, timeliness, and depth. The first person to receive the award is the current Editor in Chief of JPC, Denis Dochain.

In 2002, the *Journal of Process Control* took a major step forward when it became an official journal of IFAC. Starting in 2002 JPC took its place alongside IFAC's existing journals: *Automatica*, *Control Engineering Practice* and *Annual Reviews in Control*. JPC became the first "niche" journal, covering a specialized area of control engineering, to be honored in this way. The elevation of JPC's status to a full IFAC Journal was regarded as a natural evolution, an endorsement of the close association that had existed between JPC and IFAC for several years. JPC was an affiliated journal of IFAC since 1994, and since then it had developed good relationships with several of IFAC's technical committees and regular conferences. Elevation to a full IFAC Journal was recognition of JPC's strong position in the process control community as evidenced by its consistently good impact factor, and of process control's importance within IFAC. As a full IFAC Journal, JPC benefited through increased exposure at IFAC events and through IFAC's publicity and information channels. It became easier for the Journal to access papers presented at IFAC technical meetings, particularly the regular ADCHEM and DYCOPS symposia, with which JPC already had a good relationship. These developments strengthened JPC's position as the journal of first choice in the process control community.

During 2002, the Journal experienced a 50% increase in the number of papers submitted to it. This large step change reflected the increase in the stature of JPC within the process control community. One of the primary goals of the Editorial Board in 2002 was to reduce the time from submission to final publication. In 2002, this time dropped very substantially and a further decrease was anticipated in the future. One contributing factor was the electronic submission of manuscripts, which accounted for 75% of the papers reviewed by the Journal. New readers may not realize that prior to this time hard copies of papers were mailed to the journal, then

mailed out for review, and the entire process was very slow by today's standards.

On the publishing side in 2002 JPC benefited from unprecedented levels of readership and recognition, thanks in part to Elsevier's Science Direct on-line publication service. Science Direct included a number of features designed to increase awareness and to help researchers find the information they needed. An "articles in press" area provided access to all papers that have been accepted for publication, well in advance of their appearance in print. Free abstracts were available for all visitors to the site, whether or not they had a Science Direct account; non-account holders can go on to buy individual articles.

In 2004 Elsevier conducted an author satisfaction survey of all its journals. The Satisfaction Rating for JPC was 73.8%, and the average for all journals was 71.7%. Authors rated the journal highly in all categories but in the category Refereeing Speed JPC scored exceptionally well. The Journal was taken fully into the new Elsevier Electronic Submission (EES) system. The EES system allowed JPC to operate in a completely electronic environment. Reviews could now be submitted electronically. As a result the time from submission to publication in JPC was shortened even more.

In 2005 the first IFAC awards for the best papers published in JPC over the past triennium were presented at the Prague World Congress. Also data on publication speed became available from the EES system. Based on information from over 100 papers the time from submission to a decision was slightly under 3 months, which was excellent. Starting in 2006 the number of issues of the Journal published annually increased from eight to ten. This increase helped to further decrease the time from submission to publication.

A check of manuscripts submitted in 2006 showed that up to the beginning of October 154 manuscripts had been submitted and the acceptance rate was ~40%. This acceptance rate had remained approximately constant over the years and it indicated that only the highest quality papers were being accepted and published in JPC. A roughly equal number of papers were received from Europe/Middle East and Asia/Australia while the number of papers from the Americas was about 67% of those from the other two regions. It can be noted that over the period 1997–2006 the number of papers from North America had dropped off.

During late 2006 Journal impact factors for 2005 were released by the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI). The impact factor is a quantitative tool for ranking, evaluating, categorizing, and comparing journals. It is a measure of the frequency with which the "average article" in a journal has been cited in a particular year or period. The *Journal of Process Control* recorded a significant increase in its impact factor from 1.241 in 2004 to 1.433 in 2005. The 2005 impact factor moved JPC to 8th (of 49) in the ISI Journal Category "Automation and Control Systems". The ISI results indicated that JPC was publishing high quality papers that are being read and cited across the community. The figure below, taken from the 2007 editorial, shows how JPC's impact factor more than doubled over the six years since it was first evaluated.

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