

## ***Contemporary Accounting Research*** **Editor's Report for January 1 to December 31, 2016**

### **Overview of 2016**

*Contemporary Accounting Research (CAR)* enjoyed continued strong submission volume in 2016, while processing times continued to improve. We maintained our global reach and selectivity. A later section of this report provides detailed statistics.

With the 2016 volume of the journal, we re-united English and French abstracts with articles, rather than publishing abstracts in a separate section of the journal. To improve production quality, we took on a greater share of copyediting and proofreading prior to publication. We continued our efforts to maintain both the strong international reputation of the journal, and the highest standards of academic integrity.

Our 2016 *CAR* conference at the University of Waterloo, held in conjunction with the IASB Research Forum, attracted a sell-out crowd. The Craft of Accounting Research workshop in St. John's, Newfoundland and the PhD and junior faculty consortium in Waterloo furthered *CAR*'s outreach to young Canadian scholars.

In the remainder of this report, I discuss the following topics:

- Personnel & process changes
- External recognition of the journal
- Conferences and meetings
- Manuscript statistics
- Update - 2017 events

### **Personnel & process changes**

Early in January 2016, Mary Lui took a new job in publishing, after three years with CAAA supporting *CAR*. Amber Goldie joined the CAAA in February 2016, joining Carina Hackett in supporting the journal's manuscript processing. Their respective roles continue to evolve, but together, Carina and Amber manage the back-office functions that keep the peer-review process flowing smoothly.

Managing Editor Colin Braithwaite continues to oversee accepted manuscripts through the copyedit process up to compilation of each issue. During 2016, after consultation with Wiley, Colin took on expanded responsibility for copyediting and proofreading, to improve the journal's production quality.

As announced in last year's report, with the 2016 volume of the journal, we re-united abstracts with articles. From 2007 through 2015, the English and French abstracts for all articles were published in a separate section at the front of the journal. For these years, the electronic article and its abstract require separate downloads. The layout change to accomplish re-unification required us to re-typeset many forthcoming articles, and to change our procedures relating to French translation. We believe that this change will increase the usability of the journal.

During 2016, we continued to work on improving our systems and procedures to maintain high standards of academic integrity, and to acknowledge reviewers and editors for their support of the journal. These things came to fruition in early 2017. Please see the section “Update – 2017 events” for details.

### **External recognition of the journal**

Over the years, *CAR* has earned international recognition as one of the world’s top accounting journals. In 2016, *CAR* was one of six accounting journals in the *Financial Times* Research Rank of 50 business journals. *CAR* merited an A\* in the 2016 ranking by the Australian Business Deans’ Council, and a score of 4 from the UK Chartered Association of Business Schools’ *Academic Journal Guide 2015*. At the end of 2016, Google Scholar ranked *CAR* third among accounting and taxation journals on its h5-index, and fourth on its h5-median. In mid-2016, *CAR*’s two-year ISI impact factor was 1.782, and its five-year impact factor was 2.824.

### **Conferences and meetings**

#### ***Craft of Accounting Research workshop***

The goal of this annual one-day event, held in conjunction with the CAAA annual meeting, is to enhance the quality of research carried out in Canada. The workshop allows doctoral students and junior faculty members to learn about important aspects of research design and the publication process, in a supportive environment. Participants discuss issues and problems involved in planning and performing research, preparing manuscripts for submission to a journal, and responding to peer-review comments. We offer subsidies to Canadian PhD students, to help defray their costs of attendance.

The 2016 workshop was held on June 2 in St. John’s, NL, organized by *CAR* Consulting Editor Dan Simunic. Dan originated the Craft workshop in 1999, when he was co-Editor of the journal with Gerry Feltham. *CAR* Consulting Editor Theresa Libby and I rounded out the complement of organizing faculty. The workshop offered five students the opportunity to present and get feedback on their research, and featured panel discussions with the Editors on how to craft excellent research, and on the publication process. The 17 participants included eight students and four junior faculty members from Canadian colleges and universities, along with five students and junior faculty members from elsewhere in the world.

#### ***CAR conference***

The journal holds the annual *Contemporary Accounting Research* conference to provide a forum where the global accounting research community can engage and interact with Canadian researchers, in Canada. The invitation-only conference attracts roughly one-quarter of the annual flow of manuscripts to the journal, and a healthy number of international visitors to Canada.

We held the 2016 *CAR* conference on October 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, at the University of Waterloo in Waterloo, ON. This year’s conference had three novel features: (1) the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) collaborated with us, to include an IASB Research Forum in the conference; (2) the conference sessions took place in an amphitheatre-style classroom at the University of Waterloo’s School of Accounting and Finance, rather than in a hotel ballroom;

and (3) thanks to additional funding from the Canadian Accounting Standards Board (AcSB), the sessions were webcast live.

Alan Webb and Mike Welker shared responsibility as co-editors for the conference with me, including organizing the program, and selecting papers and discussants. The conference attracted 97 submissions, somewhat below the past few years (see Table 1 in the Manuscript statistics section). Conference submissions are peer-reviewed as regular journal submissions, but within a shorter timeframe. With the aid of Editors' recommendations, Alan, Mike and I chose three manuscripts for the IASB Research Forum, and another four to reflect a wide range of topics and methods, in keeping with *CAR* conference tradition.

As always, conference sessions consisted of presentations by authors and discussants, followed by open debate and discussion with the audience. The IASB Research Forum sessions featured two discussants: one academic, and one chosen by the IASB. You can view the conference webcast via [CPA Canada's YouTube channel](#).

### Manuscript statistics

Each year, we present statistics that illustrate *CAR*'s national and international reach, its selectivity, the timeliness of manuscript processing, and its topic and methods coverage.

#### *Canadian mandate and global reach of the journal*

Table 1 shows continuing robust submission volume in 2016, with a record high number in the regular submission stream. In 2016, 18% of submissions involved a Canadian author, consistent with recent experience. Another 44% of submissions involved at least one author working outside of Canada and the US.

**Table 1: New submissions 2012-2016 by submission type, with annual changes and region of origin**

	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
Regular	390	389	334	369	293
Conference	97	136	103	130	75
SOAR*	0	0	0	21	18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>386</b>
<i>% increase over prior year</i>	-7%	20%	-16%	35%	4%
<i>% of Total with a Canadian author</i>	18%	17%	16%	17%	16%
<i>% of Total with an author from outside Canada and the U.S.</i>	44%	37%	39%	43%	42%

\*The SOAR program began in 2011, and was discontinued in 2013.

**Table 2: Publications 2012-2016, with region of origin**

	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
<b>Volume</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>29</b>
Pages	1751	1747	1293	1661	1271
Articles, including discussants' comments	61	64	45	56	47
<i>% of articles with a Canadian author</i>	13%	17%	20%	23%	15%
<i>% of articles with an author from outside Canada and U.S.</i>	21%	28%	29%	21%	22%

The publication information in Table 2 shows variation in the page count and the number of articles through time. Volumes 29 and 31 adhered to the default page count (1300 pages) in our contract with Wiley. In v. 30 we published additional articles in each issue in an effort to clear a backlog of accepted papers, by special arrangement with Wiley. The 2015 and 2016 numbers reflect a new higher contractual page count of 1750 pages. Late in 2016, the CAAA Board of Directors agreed to purchase additional pages for the 2017 issue, in a further effort to reduce the backlog of articles waiting to appear in an issue. That increase will be reflected in next year's numbers.

Comparing the regional percentages in Table 2 with those in Table 1 confirms that the journal generally publishes papers by Canadian scholars at rates similar to their submission percent, and those by non-US international authors at rates below their submission percent. Please note that it is misleading to compare publication numbers year-by-year with submission numbers, because papers vary in the time from initial submission to publication, generally taking from two to four years. Almost no papers are published in the year of submission.

### ***Selectivity***

Table 3 reports on first-round decisions, demonstrating *CAR*'s highly selective peer-review process. The "withdraw" decision indicates papers that were not suitable for the journal, either because they did not fit within the journal's Aims and Scope, or because they did not merit reviewers' time. First-round rejections are those where, after peer-review, the Editor found that the paper did not meet *CAR*'s standards, and was unlikely to do so with another revision. Papers are rarely accepted on the first round, so we can infer from the sum of rejections and withdrawals that about 20-25% of submitted papers receive a "revise" recommendation in the first round.

**Table 3: First-round rejection and withdrawal decisions, as a percent of submissions, 2012-2016**

	2016*	2015	2014	2013	2012
First-round rejections	52%	60%	59%	66%	61%
First-round withdrawals	<u>28%</u>	<u>21%</u>	<u>16%</u>	<u>10%</u>	<u>9%</u>
<b>Sum of rejections &amp; withdrawals</b>	80%	81%	76%	76%	70%

\* The 2016 numbers represent the 458 submissions that had a first-round decision at the end of March 2017, out of 487 total 2016 submissions.

***Turnaround time***

Turnaround time, reported in Table 4, is the time from an author's submission until he or she receives a decision. We have not yet achieved CAR's goal that 90% of manuscripts should be turned around within 100 days. We closely monitor manuscripts that approach or exceed the 100-day mark, and follow up with Editors and reviewers as needed, to maintain timeliness without sacrificing quality.

**Table 4: Timeliness of first-round feedback to authors, 2012-2016**

	2016*	2015	2014	2013	2012
# under 100 days	354	379	293	283	303
Total new ms.s	458	525	437	520	386
% under 100 days	77%	72%	67%	54%	78%
Median turnaround time (days):					
Regular	74	75	81	106	78
Conference	83	95	90	81	75
SOAR**	-	-	-	79	72

\* The 2016 numbers represent the 458 submissions that had a first-round decision at the end of March 2017, out of 487 total 2016 submissions.

\*\*The SOAR program began in 2011, and was discontinued in 2013.

**Topics and methods**

From its inception, *CAR* has taken pride in being open to all forms of accounting research. It is difficult to convey the breadth of the research we publish in tabular form: many papers use multiple methods or span more than one topic area. In keeping with tradition, Table 5 below summarizes authors' self-reports of topic areas and methods for 2016 submissions. If an author identified more than one topic or more than one method, Table 5 reports the first.

**Table 5: New submissions 2016, by topic area and method**

<b>Topic:</b>	<b>Audit</b>	<b>Manag'l</b>	<b>Fin'l</b>	<b>Tax</b>	<b>AIS</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Row Total</b>	<b>Row %</b>
<b>Method:</b>								
Analytical	4	7	15	1	0	3	<b>30</b>	<b>6%</b>
Experimental	24	20	14	0	0	1	<b>59</b>	<b>12%</b>
Empirical/Archival	77	52	193	28	1	15	<b>366</b>	<b>75%</b>
Case/Field Study	11	5	3	1	1	1	<b>22</b>	<b>5%</b>
Other	2	2	4	0	0	2	<b>10</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Column Total</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Column %</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Tables 6 and 7 below summarize the evolution through time of topic and method percentages. Comparisons through time are impeded somewhat by the fact that categories have changed. For example, until 2013, authors could choose "Archival" and "Empirical" as separate categories, along with the eminently empirical categories "Experimental" and "Case/Field Study". Table 6 assumes that authors in this period interpreted "Empirical" to mean "Archival". In addition, because these data were not reported for SOAR submissions in 2012, Tables 6 and 7 pertain only to non-SOAR submissions. Overall, the mix of methods and topics in 2016 submissions are close to the recent historical averages.

**Table 6: Submission mix by method, 2012-2016**

<b>Method</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2012</b>
Analytical	6%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Experimental	12%	14%	11%	12%	15%
Empirical/Archival	75%	74%	74%	73%	69%
Case/Field Study/Other	5%	4%	5%	5%	7%
Other	2%	3%	5%	5%	4%
	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 7: Submission mix by topic area, 2012-2016**

<b>Topic Area</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2012</b>
Auditing	24%	27%	22%	22%	27%
Managerial	18%	11%	14%	13%	13%
Financial	47%	53%	52%	53%	50%
Taxation	6%	5%	7%	8%	6%
AIS	0%	0%	1%	2%	2%
Other	5%	5%	4%	3%	2%
	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **Update - 2017 events**

This report covers activity in 2016, but here I report on a few details from the first months of 2017.

In January 2017, we raised the fee for new submissions to *CAR* to \$400 for non-CAAA members, and \$225 for members. This brings the journal's fees into line with other journals of similar international standing. We maintain our practice of not charging a submission fee for invited revisions.

During the first months of 2017, we completed an overhaul of submission guidelines and instructions for authors. This overhaul included implementing a new author declaration form, required with all new submissions. With this declaration, authors attest that their research and the submitted manuscript adhere to the high standards of academic integrity that *CAR* readers and the rest of the academic community expect.

In April 2017, we solidified the practice of offering a waiver of a future submission fee as a small token of appreciation to reviewers who provide two prompt reviews. *CAR* has had this practice at least since the 1990s, supported by fairly informal record-keeping. With the increase in submission volume in recent years, keeping track of fee waivers using informal methods had become unmanageable. Moreover, because the waivers had no expiry date, *CAR* was accumulating a potentially substantial contingent liability. By creating a new formal process for tracking who has earned a waiver, and instituting a gradual expiry policy, we sought to create a sustainable process that will retain the goodwill of our reviewer base.

For me, the most significant event in early 2017 was of course handing the Editor-in-chief baton to Mike Welker. We have worked collaboratively since last May to ensure a smooth transition. Mike's official start date was May 1, 2017, but he graciously took charge of the 2017 *CAR* conference, beginning before the submission deadline of April 7. I trust Mike's good judgment, and believe that his leadership will improve the journal's reputation for excellence well into the future.

The past four years have certainly been eventful. I thank all members of *CAR*'s community: authors, reviewers, editors and staff members, for their enthusiastic support of the journal. Collectively, they make the journal great.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Pete C. O'Brien', written over a horizontal line.

former Editor-in-chief  
*Contemporary Accounting Research*

10 May 2017