

Contemporary Accounting Research
Editor's Report for January 1 to December 31, 2015

Overview of 2015

The number of new submissions to *Contemporary Accounting Research (CAR)* reached a new high in 2015, and processing times recovered from the 2013 trough. The section on manuscript statistics provides more details.

During the year, we decided to re-align how we compose our articles, to include the abstracts with the papers; worked on strengthening safeguards for academic integrity; amended the contract with Wiley Periodicals (Wiley); and reworked our copyright transfer agreement to allow compliance with granting agency policies. Details are in the sections on academic integrity and on contract and process news.

Our 2015 *CAR* conference in Vancouver was an academic success, enjoyed by a sell-out crowd. The Craft of Accounting Research workshop in Toronto and the PhD and junior faculty consortium in Vancouver furthered *CAR*'s outreach to young Canadian scholars.

The UK Association of Business Schools published its updated Academic Journal Guide in February 2015, ranking *CAR* among the top six of 80 accounting journals, with a rating of 4, just below its top rating of 4*.

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

- Academic integrity
- Contract and process news
- Conferences and meetings
- Manuscript processing statistics
- Later events

Academic integrity

In my 2014 report, I discussed an investigation by Bentley University into allegations of misconduct by Dr. James Hunton. At the time of last year's report, we had retracted two of the three *CAR* articles co-authored by Dr. Hunton. After consideration of all the evidence, and with the co-operation of the co-authors, we retracted the third article during 2015. The events and disclosures associated with this investigation and these retractions have caused a dramatic re-examination of policies on academic integrity at *CAR* and many other journals.

In consultation with the CAAA task force on academic integrity and *CAR*'s editors, in 2015 I drafted changes to strengthen the journal's guidelines and procedures, to protect our community from academic misconduct. In June 2015, we began using plagiarism-detection software on all submissions, new and revised. Other planned changes include clearer guidance on authors' responsibilities, and a declaration of integrity to accompany new submissions.

Contract and process news

Abstracts reunited with papers

For the past several years *CAR* abstracts have been published in a separate section at the front of each issue, rather than appearing as a lead-in to the article. This separation exists in both the print and online versions; the online article and abstract are separate files, accessed via separate links. Most readers access *CAR* electronically. If the downloaded article does not include the abstract, then most often the reader does not separately view or retain the abstract. We decided in 2015 to reunite abstracts and articles, to improve usability. Beginning with the Winter 2016 issue, the English and French abstracts appear at the head of each article, allowing a single download for the complete content.

Contract with Wiley

During 2015, the CAAA renewed our contract with Wiley Periodicals. The contract negotiations included an increase in *CAR*'s contractual page count to 1750 pages beginning in 2015, to reduce the delay that authors experience before their accepted manuscripts appear in a compiled issue. I hope that by the end of 2016, this lag will be under one year. In addition, we continue to work closely with Wiley to maintain high production quality for the journal, both online and in print.

Copyright transfer and government-funded research

In 2015, the Canadian Tri-Council granting agencies announced new Open Access requirements, joining counterparts elsewhere in the world. Starting with grants awarded in 2015, research funded by the Tri-Council must be publicly accessible without fees. To ensure that we remain a premier outlet for top-notch research, regardless of who funds it, we revised our copyright transfer agreement in 2015, with Wiley's co-operation. The changes will allow authors to comply with granting agencies' requirements for access.

Editorial service recognition

Early in 2015, we began thanking Editorial Board (EB) members annually for their service to the journal. A pragmatic reason for this initiative is that EB members need to document their external service for annual performance reviews at their universities. Beyond that, the letters reflect my sincere gratitude toward the many academics who volunteer their time and expertise in service to the journal. In January each year, we send an individual letter of thanks to each EB member, including Editors and Consulting Editors, acknowledging his or her service during the prior year.

Conferences and meetings

Craft of Accounting Research workshop

This annual one-day event enhances the quality of research carried out in Canada, by allowing doctoral students to learn about important aspects of research design and the publication process in a supportive environment. The interactive workshop discusses issues and problems involved in planning and performing research, preparing manuscripts for submission to a journal, and responding to reviewer comments. We offer subsidies to help Canadian PhD students defray the costs of attendance.

The 2015 workshop was held on May 28 in Toronto, ON, 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* Editors Khim Kelly and Partha Mohanram rounded out the complement of organizing faculty. The workshop offered eight 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 the publication process. The 25 participants included seventeen students and three junior faculty members from Canadian colleges and universities, along with five students and junior faculty members from elsewhere in the world.

PhD and junior faculty consortium

Each year since 2002, a full-day consortium has preceded the *CAR* Conference. The consortium allows faculty experts attending the *CAR* Conference to present their ideas and insights about research to Canadian doctoral students and junior faculty members. The overall objective is to broaden participants' appreciation of research, beyond what is emphasized at their home institutions, and to provide background to facilitate their participation in the conference itself. As with the Craft workshop, we offer subsidies to Canadian doctoral students to reduce their costs of attending.

CAR Editor Joe Carcello organized the 2015 consortium in Vancouver, BC. The program featured presentations by Linda Myers of the University of Arkansas, Lynn Hannan of Tulane University and Jean Bédard of Laval University, respectively speaking about archival, experimental and field research. The day concluded with a session with senior editors Russell Lundholm representing *The Review of Accounting Studies* and myself representing *CAR*, on navigating the review process at academic journals.

In total, 17 doctoral students from Canadian universities attended the 2015 consortium, along with 9 junior faculty members. The attendees gained a rare opportunity to participate in the invitation-only *CAR* conference.

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. Conference sessions consist of presentations by an author and a discussant, followed by open debate and discussion with the audience.

We held the 2015 *CAR* Conference on October 30th and 31st, in Vancouver, BC. I owe a large debt of gratitude to Joe Carcello and Alan Webb, who shared responsibility as co-editors for the conference with me, helping me with organizing and selecting papers and discussants. Following long-standing tradition, the seven conference papers reflected a wide range of topics and methods. World-renowned scholars served as discussants, contributing a broad perspective on the research and its implications for organizations, markets and society. You can view the conference schedule and presentation slides, at the CAAA website.

The conference attracted 136 submissions, up from 103 in 2014, and a new record for this conference. To narrow the field from 136 to only seven papers on the program took extraordinary effort from our Editors and reviewers, within a short timeframe. The conference itself sold out very quickly, disappointing many invitees who wished to attend. In the follow-up survey, participants once again praised the diversity of topics and the quality of the speakers, particularly the discussants.

Manuscript processing 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. Please note that we found some computation errors in statistics reported in prior years, so the numbers reported may not precisely match those reported in prior reports. The differences are inconsequential, except in Table 3, which I discuss further below.

Canadian mandate and global reach of the journal

Table 1 shows continuing robust submission volume in 2015, with record high numbers in both the regular submission stream and the conference stream. In 2015, 17% of submissions involved a Canadian author, consistent with recent experience. Another 37% of submissions involve at least one author working outside of Canada and the US.

Table 1: New submissions 2011-2015 by submission type, with annual changes and region of origin

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Regular	388	334	369	293	273
Conference	136	103	130	75	91
SOAR*	0	0	21	18	7
TOTAL	524	437	520	386	371
<i>% change from prior year</i>	20%	-16%	35%	4%	20%
<i>% of Total with a Canadian author</i>	17%	16%	17%	16%	14%
<i>% of Total with an author from outside Canada and the US</i>	37%	39%	43%	42%	38%

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

Table 2: Publications 2011-2015, with region of origin

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Volume	32	31	30	29	28
Pages	1747	1293	1661	1271	1668
Articles, including discussants' comments	64	45	56	47	56
<i>% of articles with a Canadian author</i>	17%	20%	23%	15%	21%
<i>% of articles with an author from outside Canada and the US</i>	28%	29%	21%	22%	25%

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 in our contract with Wiley. In v. 28, we published an extra issue for the 25th Anniversary *CAR* Conference; 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 numbers reflect the new higher contractual page count, discussed earlier in this report.

Comparing the regional percentages in Table 2 with those in Table 1 confirms that the journal generally publishes papers by Canadian scholars at rates slightly higher than 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

Statistics in Table 3 on first round decisions demonstrate that *CAR* is highly selective. 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 one-quarter of submitted papers receive a “revise” recommendation in the first round. Generally, the rate of withdrawals has increased over time, indicating that we are eliminating more unsuitable papers prior to review. That outcome sounds harsh, but in the long run it preserves both author and reviewer time.

Table 3: First-round rejection and withdrawal decisions, as a percent of submissions, 2011-2015

	2015*	2014	2013	2012	2011
First-round rejections	60%	59%	66%	61%	60%
First-round withdrawals	22%	16%	10%	9%	8%
Sum of rejections & withdrawals	82%	76%	76%	70%	68%

* The 2015 numbers represent the 509 submissions that had a first-round decision at the end of March 2015, out of 524 total 2015 submissions.

The percentages reported here differ slightly from those reported in prior reports. In re-examining the data, we found that some withdraw decisions were not counted in previous tallies of 2012-2014, causing the reported rates of withdrawals to be lower than those reported in the table above. For unknown reasons, prior reports for 2011 were based on only 271 of 371 total submissions, so the percentages were distorted.

Turnaround time

Table 4: Timeliness of first-round feedback to authors, 2011-2015

	2015*	2014	2013	2012	2011
# of ms.s under 100 days	377	293	283	303	252
Total new ms.s	509	437	520	386	371
% under 100 days	74%	67%	54%	78%	68%
Median turnaround time (days):					
Regular	71	81	106	78	83
Conference	95	90	81	75	92
SOAR**	N/A	N/A	79	72	66

* The 2015 numbers represent the 509 submissions that had a first-round decision at the end of March 2015, out of 524 total 2015 submissions.

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

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. This measure took a negative turn in 2013, as I explained in that

year's report. Thanks to assistance from Deputy Editor-in-chief Alan Webb, we have regained the lost ground. 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.

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, often the most interesting ones, 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 2015 submissions. If an author identified more than one topic or more than one method, Table 5 reports the first.

Table 5: New submissions 2015, by topic area and method

Topic:	Audit	Manag'l	Fin'l	Tax	AIS	Other	Row Total	Row %
Method:								
Analytical	5	5	12	1	0	3	26	5%
Experimental	38	16	17	1	0	0	72	14%
Empirical/ Archival	83	28	244	22	2	9	388	74%
Case/ Field Study/ Other	11	5	2	0	0	4	22	4%
Other Areas and Methods	2	2	3	0	0	9	16	3%
Column total	139	56	278	24	2	25	524	100%
Column %	27%	11%	53%	5%	0%	5%	100%	

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 interpreted "Empirical" to be equivalent to "Archival". In addition, because these data were not reported for SOAR submissions in 2011 or 2012, Tables 6 and 7 pertain only to non-SOAR submissions. Overall, the mix of methods and topics in 2015 submissions are close to the recent historical averages.

Table 6: Submission mix by method, 2011-2015

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Method					
Analytical	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Experimental	14%	11%	12%	15%	12%
Empirical/Archival	74%	74%	73%	69%	69%
Case/Field Study/Other	4%	5%	5%	7%	6%
Other	3%	5%	5%	4%	8%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 7: Submission mix by topic area, 2011-2015

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Method					
Auditing	27%	22%	22%	27%	27%
Managerial	11%	14%	13%	13%	11%
Financial	53%	52%	53%	50%	50%
Taxation	5%	7%	8%	6%	4%
AIS	0%	1%	2%	2%	2%
Other	5%	4%	3%	2%	6%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Later events

This report covers activity in 2015, but here I report on a few details from the first months of 2016.

Early in January 2016, we wished Mary Lui well, as she left CAAA for a new job in publishing. Mary provided superb support to *CAR*'s review process as Editorial Assistant from 2012 through 2015. Amber Goldie joined the CAAA in February 2016 as Editorial and Communications Specialist. She has taken over the role of supporting manuscript processing with remarkable speed and enthusiasm, while also taking the lead role in implementing the CAAA's new website. I am delighted to have her on the team.

The following staff members currently support *CAR*: Editorial Specialist Amber Goldie handles manuscript submissions and the review process; Publications Assistant Carina Hackett assists with manuscript processing, generates reports and handles correspondence; and Managing Editor Colin Braithwaite oversees accepted manuscripts through the copyedit process up to compilation of each issue. CAAA Member Services Coordinator Louise Laroche assists with conferences and meetings, while CAAA Executive Director Mary Henricksen oversees financial matters, contracts and conference arrangements.

In January 2016, Colin Braithwaite, Mary Henricksen and I met with Wiley to discuss production quality and processes. Following that meeting, we have altered some of our processes, including formalizing Colin's role in proofreading and copyediting, and changing the timing of some parts of the production process.

As I begin my final year in the role of *CAR* Editor-in-chief, I look forward to working with my successor to ensure a smooth transition. I remain utterly indebted to all members of *CAR*'s community: authors, reviewers, editors and staff members, who collectively make the journal great.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Editor-in-chief

Contemporary Accounting Research

16 May 2015