

Contemporary Accounting Research **Editor's Report for January 1 to December 31, 2014**

Overview of 2014

During 2014, we completed the editorial transition at *Contemporary Accounting Research* (CAR), with the new Editorial Board beginning its three-year term on May 1. The contributions of time and energy from these editors, reviewers and advisors constitute the journal's most significant resource.

Submission volume in 2014, while somewhat below 2013's blockbuster numbers, continues an increasing trend from prior years. The journal's quality remains strong, thanks to its robust, fair and constructive peer review process. Last year, I reported a slide in timeliness, which we turned around in 2014. See the section on manuscript processing statistics below for more details.

Another CAR paper earned external accolades in 2014. "The Ties that Bind: The Decision to Co-Offend in Fraud" by Clinton Free and Pamela R. Murphy (CAR 32:1, Spring 2015) won the 2014 Competitive Manuscript Award from the American Accounting Association's Forensic & Investigative Accounting section. We are proud that Professors Free and Murphy chose CAR as the outlet for their work.

A well-publicized academic integrity case represented a major challenge for CAR during 2014. The events and discoveries associated with this incident have forced the accounting academic community to re-examine policies and procedures relating to integrity in research, peer review and publishing. Please see the Academic Integrity section below for further information.

In the remainder of this report, I discuss changes in the Editorial team that occurred during 2014, provide further information about the academic integrity issue, describe CAR's participation in conferences and meetings, summarize the manuscript flow and discuss other activities.

Editorial team

After the 2013-14 transition year, the Editorial Board (EB) for 2014-17 took on their new responsibilities on May 1. The new EB has considerable continuity from the old: all of the Consulting Editors, fifteen of the twenty-two Editors, and eighty-three of the other one hundred forty-one EB members continue from the 2013-14 EB, some in new roles. Thirty-six percent of EB members work at Canadian institutions, and another nine percent are Canadians working abroad. For details on the Editorial Board as of May 2014, please consult the CAAA website.

Manuscript processing was not disrupted in the transition to the new EB, as all outgoing Editors graciously agreed to continue handling papers they had started. This has been CAR's long-standing policy, colorfully named "cradle to grave" handling, but nonetheless I acknowledge the Editors for this continuing gift of their time and expertise. The major change in process from 2013 was a positive one: Alan Webb took on the role of Deputy Editor-in-Chief at the start of 2014, and has helped me reverse the slide in timeliness seen last year.

Behind the scenes, the journal enjoys continuing support from Editorial Assistant Mary Lui, who capably handles the manuscript submission and review process, from Managing Editor Colin Braithwaite, who oversees accepted manuscripts through the copyedit process up to compilation of each issue, and from CAAA Member Services Coordinator Louise Laroche, who assists with conferences and meetings. In February 2014, Carina Hackett began work as Publications Assistant, replacing Michelle Wright. Carina has been invaluable – I simply could not manage without her. Finally, in December 2014, the CAAA welcomed a new Executive Director, Mary Henriksen, who oversees financial matters, contracts and conference arrangements.

Academic integrity

In July, Bentley University released a report (<https://www.bentley.edu/files/Hunton%20report%20July21.pdf>) on its investigation of a former faculty member. The report focuses on two papers, one of them published in *CAR*. It finds evidence of misconduct, and calls into question all of this author's published work, including two further articles published in *CAR*. Following additional investigation, and with the active involvement and consent of the co-authors on both studies, two *CAR* articles have been retracted to date. A third is under continuing investigation.

Retraction is not an outcome anyone desires, and we do not take these decisions lightly. I have received sound advice from three of *CAR*'s Consulting Editors at each stage of the process with the papers in question, have been in frequent communication with the senior editors of several other accounting journals, and have participated actively in the CAAA task force on the matter. We share a common goal: to shore up our academic community's defenses against misconduct.

Conferences and meetings

Annually, *CAR* sponsors three events: the *CAR* Conference, the PhD and Junior Faculty Consortium held prior to the *CAR* Conference, and the Craft of Accounting Research Workshop held prior to the start of the CAAA Annual 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 2014 *CAR* Conference on October 17th and 18th, in Halifax, NS. I owe a large debt of gratitude to Theresa Libby and Joe Carcello, 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 program, including the program for the consortium that preceded it, at the CAAA website.

The conference attracted 103 submissions, down from 130 in 2013, but above the previous high of 91 in 2011. To narrow the field from 103 to only seven papers on the program took extraordinary effort from our Editors and reviewers, in a short timeframe. The conference itself sold out very quickly, disappointing many invitees who wished to attend. In the follow-up survey, participants praised the diversity of topics and the quality of the speakers, particularly the discussants.

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. We offer subsidies to Canadian doctoral students to reduce their costs of attending.

CAR Editor Joe Carcello organized the 2014 consortium in Halifax, NS. The program included a panel of editors from *CAR*, *Accounting Review*, the *Journal of the American Taxation Association*, and the *Review of Accounting Studies*. The four panelists provided insights into the publication process in top-tier journals, and advice about navigating the peer-review process. Next up was a panel offering career advice, featuring four scholars from the ranks of assistant and associate professors, from Canada and the US. An afternoon session featured Prof. Harry Evans of the University of Pittsburgh, presenting his (and co-authors') thoughts on "Self-Assessing Your Empirical Accounting Research," based on a paper that is forthcoming in *CAR*. Finally, consortium participants had an opportunity to mingle informally in small groups with all the speakers.

In all, 25 doctoral students and non-presenting junior faculty members attended the 2014 consortium and the *CAR* conference that followed. The attendees included fourteen students from Canadian universities, who gained a rare opportunity to participate in the invitation-only *CAR* conference.

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 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 defray the costs of attendance for up to ten Canadian PhD students each year.

The 2014 workshop was held on May 29 in Edmonton, AB, organized by *CAR* Consulting Editor Dan Simunic. Dan originated the Craft workshop in 1999, during his time as co-Editor (with Gerry Feltham) of the journal. *CAR* Editors Susan Krische and Jeff Pittman rounded out the complement of organizing faculty. The workshop offered eight students the opportunity to

present and get feedback on their research, and three others an opportunity to peer-review a paper. The 27 participants included sixteen students and four junior faculty members from Canadian universities, along with seven students and junior faculty members from around the world.

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.

Canadian mandate and global reach of the journal

Table 1 shows that submission volume in 2014 tapered off somewhat from 2013, in both the regular submission stream and the conference stream, but remained strong. In 2014, 16% of submissions involved a Canadian author, consistent with recent experience. Another 39% of submissions involve at least one author working outside of Canada and the US.

**Table 1: New submissions 2010-2014 by submission type,
with annual changes and region of origin**

	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
Regular	334	369	293	273	246
Conference	103	130	75	91	64
SOAR*	0	21	18	7	N/A
TOTAL	437	520	386	371	310
<i>% change from prior year</i>	-16%	35%	4%	20%	6%
<i>% of Total with a Canadian author</i>	16%	17%	16%	14%	17%
<i>% of Total with an author from outside Canada and the US</i>	39%	43%	42%	38%	35%

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

Table 2: Publications 2010-2014, with region of origin

	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
Volume	31	30	29	28	27
Pages	1293	1661	1271	1668	1239
Articles, including discussants' comments	45	56	47	56	34
<i>% of articles with a Canadian author</i>	20%	23%	15%	21%	22%
<i>% of articles with an author from outside Canada and the US</i>	29%	21%	22%	25%	22%

The publication information in Table 2 shows variation in page count and number of articles through time. In v. 28 (2011), we published an extra issue for the 25th Anniversary *CAR* Conference; in 2013 we published additional articles in each issue in an effort to clear a backlog of accepted papers. Other years reflect adherence to the default page count in our Wiley contract. The regional percentages, when we compare Table 2 with Table 1, confirm that the journal generally publishes Canadian scholars at rates slightly higher than their submission percent. I refrain from comparing the publication numbers year-by-year with submission numbers, because papers vary in the time from initial submission to publication, generally from two to three years.

Selectivity

Statistics in Table 3 on first round decisions demonstrate that *CAR* is highly selective. The “withdrawal” 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 received a full review, but the Editor found that the paper did not meet *CAR*’s standards, and was unlikely to do so with another revision. Because “accept” is rarely seen on the first round, we can infer from the Sum of rejections and withdrawals that in recent years, 23-30% of submitted papers receive a “revise” recommendation in the first round, compared with 45% five years ago. The 2014 numbers show a substantial increase in the rate of withdrawals, but only a modest rise in the overall first-round reject or withdraw rate, 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, 2010-2014*

Percentage of submissions	2014**	2013	2012	2011	2010
First-round rejections	59%	65%	60%	61%	49%
First-round withdrawals	17%	9%	10%	11%	6%
Sum of rejections & withdrawals	76%	75%	70%	73%	55%

*We discovered computation errors in data reported prior to 2013, so some of the above figures do not match those in earlier reports.

** The 2014 numbers represent the 433 (of 437) 2014 submissions that had a first-round decision at the end of April 2015.

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, although we were approaching it in 2011 and 2012. This measure took a steep dive in 2013, as I explained in that year's report. With assistance from Deputy Editor-in-chief Alan Webb, we have regained some of the lost ground among regular submissions. We closely follow manuscripts that approach or exceed the 100-day mark, following up with Editors and reviewers as needed.

Table 4: Timeliness of first-round feedback to authors, 2009-2013

	2014[§]	2013	2012*	2011	2010
# of ms.s under 100 days	293	282	307	246	229
Total new ms.s	437	520	386	371	310
% under 100 days	67%	54%	80%	82%	74%
Median turnaround time (days):					
Regular	81	106	78	72	77
Conference	90	81	68	91	66
SOAR**	N/A	79	71	N/A	N/A

*We discovered a computation error in the turnaround data in the 2012 report, so these figures do not match those in the earlier report.

**The SOAR program began in 2011, and was discontinued in 2013. In 2011, the SOAR program had 7 submissions and timeliness statistics were not calculated.

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. To do justice to the breadth requires reading the papers (which I invite you to do!). Nonetheless, in keeping with tradition, below is a matrix of statistics on authors' self-reports of topic areas and methods for 2014 submissions, followed by tables summarizing the evolution on these dimensions through time.

Table 5: New submissions 2014, by topic area and method

Topic:	Audit	Manag'l	Fin'l	Tax	AIS	Other	Row Total	Row %
Method:								
Analytical	2	7	12	0			21	5%
Experimental	14	14	18	2			48	11%
Empirical/ Archival	72	30	196	26			324	74%
Case/ Field Study/ Other	9	9	2	2			22	5%
Other Areas and Methods					3	19	22	5%
Column total	97	60	228	30	3	19	437	100%
Column %	22%	14%	52%	7%	1%	4%	100%	

Comparisons through time are impeded by the fact that categories have changed. For example, the topic area "AIS" was not reported separately in 2010; also in that year, authors could choose "Archival" and "Empirical" as separate categories, along with the eminently empirical categories "Experimental" and "Case/Field Study". In Table 6, I assume 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.

Table 6: Submission mix by method, 2010-2014

	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
Method					
Analytical	5%	5%	5%	5%	7%
Experimental	11%	12%	15%	12%	14%
Empirical/Archival	74%	73%	69%	69%	74%
Case/Field Study/Other	5%	5%	7%	6%	5%
Other	5%	5%	4%	8%	NR
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 7: Submission mix by topic area, 2010-2014

	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
Method					
Auditing	22%	22%	27%	27%	28%
Managerial	14%	13%	13%	11%	14%
Financial	52%	53%	50%	50%	54%
Taxation	7%	8%	6%	4%	3%
AIS	1%	2%	2%	2%	NR
Other	4%	3%	2%	6%	2%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Overall, the mix of methods in 2014 submissions is close to the recent historical average. Among topics, auditing submissions have declined over these five years, while taxation submissions have increased.

Looking forward

This report covers only 2014, but here I report on a few details from the first months of 2015.

In consultation with the CAAA task force on academic integrity and *CAR*'s editors, in early 2015 I drafted changes to the journal's guidelines and procedures, to help protect our community from academic misconduct. I hope to have changes in place before the summer.

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

We continue to work with our publisher, Wiley, to reduce the delay that authors experience before their accepted manuscripts appear in print. Wiley has agreed to a modest increase in pages, beginning 2015, which should alleviate the backlog.

Starting in 2015, the Canadian federal granting agencies have announced specific new Open Access requirements, joining counterparts elsewhere in the world. Our goal is to ensure that we remain a premier outlet for top-notch research, regardless of who funds it.

Early in 2015, we initiated a practice of thanking Editorial Board 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, but the letters reflect my genuine gratitude toward all the people who serve the journal so well, and without compensation. We sent individual letters of thanks to each EB member, including Editors and Consulting Editors, acknowledging his or her service during 2014.

To close on a further note of gratitude, I thank all the members of *CAR*'s community: authors, reviewers, editors and staff members, who collectively make the journal great.

Respectfully submitted,



Editor-in-chief

Contemporary Accounting Research

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