Ten Good Years
Eduardo Marbán

I take this opportunity to look back at the 10 years of my editorship. Circulation Research has been a force to be reckoned with in my life and career for the last 10 eventful years. Much has been accomplished, much has changed: in the journal, as in cardiovascular science. We, my Associate Editors, and I have done our best to usher in the new millennium, while remaining true stewards of this venerable publication.

Circulation Research had another banner year in 2008. In total, we received 1983 manuscript submissions in 2008, a 53% increase in manuscript submissions over those received in 1999, when the Marbán editorship began. Figure 1 tracks the steadily increasing manuscript submissions received since 1990. Submissions are tracking on course in 2009 to date. As in past years, the Editors of Circulation Research have maintained a competitively low acceptance rate, now 15% (Figure 2). When we took over the reins in July 1999, the acceptance rate was 22%. We sought to continue to improve the journal by tightening the acceptance rate; corollary efforts included determinations to reduce the reject de novo rate, to triage inappropriate papers at an early editorial stage, and to give authors meaningful feedback in our decision letters. Figure 3 highlights the trends in acceptance rates for the last 10 years, noting the steady decrease from 22% in 1999% to 16% in 2008.

Circulation Research has an unmistakable global presence, evidenced by the diverse geographic distribution of manuscripts submitted to the journal in 2008 (Figure 4). Although a plurality of manuscripts are submitted to Circulation Research from within the United States (44%), we also saw a strong contingent of submissions from the traditional European scientific powerhouses of Germany, Italy, Spain, France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. This certainly does not diminish the significant contributions from Japan, China, and Australia. The Editors foresee future growth in submissions from authors in South Korea, Taiwan, the Middle East (notably Israel), Brazil, the Russian Federation, and South Africa. Figure 5 shows the trend in submissions received from the United States, Europe, Japan, Canada, and the rest of the global community from 2000 to 2008. The Associate Editors and I are proud of the journal’s international reach, which has steadily spread in the last 10 years.

The competitiveness of a journal is often measured by efficiency statistics, such as the time to first decision. In 1999, the average time from submission to submission to first decision was reduced to a remarkably short 2.7 weeks (Figure 6). Figure 7 tracks the time from submission to acceptance and acceptance to print publication for original research articles from 1998 to 2009 to date. On average, an original research paper appeared in a print issue of Circulation Research 22 weeks after submission (Figure 8). Furthermore, all original research articles are Published Ahead of Print online at http://circres.ahajournals.org/onlinefirst.shtml. Original Contributions were published ahead of print online an average 10 days after acceptance. In this rapid online publication model, original research articles are copyedited and composed into a publication-quality downloadable PDF imprinted with the journal’s watermark. Circulation Research was the leader among American Heart Association journals in publishing all original research articles online ahead of print, as we were in implementing paper-free manuscript submission and review.

We started out in the fall of 1999 developing four thematic review series. It was a new concept for Circulation Research, and one that proved so successful that we went on to publish 53 thematic review series in 10 years! I am extremely proud of this accomplishment. Not only are review articles routinely the most highly cited articles published in the journal, but grouping reviews together in a meaningful way, organized under pertinent and timely subtopics, provides value to the readers. We later decided to take thematic review series on the road—literally. In 2002, we initiated the first annual Circulation Research Symposium at American Heart Association Scientific Sessions, based on a thematic review series in the journal. These symposia have been well-attended at Sessions and have covered a range of hot topics, including microRNAs and heart disease, biological imaging of the cardiovascular system, and unanswered questions in heart failure.

The Editors would also like to highlight the redesigned Circulation Research website (http://circres.ahajournals.org), which serves as a public portal to all Circulation Research web content. We are continually working to keep the homepage updated with current journal content, useful announcements about new journal features, links to meeting abstracts, and helpful journal information for authors and readers. Our readers wanted easier access to the article and its supplementary material. In 2008, we responded by introducing the Online Data Supplement—appended article PDF. This convenient new feature allows you to view the published article and Online Data Supplement with one click. After clicking on the PDF link from the e-Table of Contents, the downloaded article PDF will contain the Online Data Supplement after the article.

Other web content highlights include “extracts” for articles, which do not contain an abstract. The extract provides readers with the first 100 words of the article, a feature that has markedly improved the readability of our editorials.
Additionally, Circulation Research published the Basic Cardiovascular Science Council meeting abstracts in the August 29th journal issue, along with the Late-Breaking Basic Science abstracts from the American Heart Association Scientific Sessions in the December 5th journal issue. Finally, the Editors pushed the digital envelope a little further by initiating a new e-marketing campaign for Circulation Research in 2008, the first comprehensive digital marketing drive for the journal since its inception. In place of traditional direct “snail mail,” a series of marketing emails were sent to thousands of potential new readers and authors, highlighting the innovative and world-class content of Circulation Research.

The impact factor for Circulation Research was 9.989 in 2008.1 The journal was ranked 2nd in the Peripheral Vascular Disease category and 3rd in the Cardiac and Cardiovascular Systems and Hematology categories.

In closing, I would like to reintroduce a “to-do” list of sorts from a state of the journal editorial I published in early 2000, after 6 months as Editor in Chief. We have achieved all of these goals, and so much more.

- An editorial commitment to decisive action and clear communication
- All-electronic manuscript management from receipt in the editorial office to transmission to the publisher
- New efforts to maximize information content on the printed page, including the use of online supplements for extended methods and miscellaneous supporting information
- Institution of two new electronic manuscript formats: UltraRapid Communications, in which high-priority manuscripts are reviewed very quickly and published online within 1 month of acceptance; and Research Commentaries, peer-reviewed technical comments on work which has appeared in Circulation Research
- Adoption of a manuscript triage process whereby noncompetitive or inappropriate papers (comprising approximately 10% of overall submissions) are identified early in the process, enabling rapid feedback to the authors

I take this opportunity to thank the American Heart Association for its unfailing support of Circulation Research.
Likewise, the office staff of the journal, and particularly the Managing Editor, Kara Hansell Keehan, have done a consistently wonderful job in support of our efforts. The Associate Editors and I have done our best to guide the journal through a sea change of technology and competitive challenges which touched every aspect of peer review and publishing. We have fiercely guarded the integrity of Circulation Research, while still remaining open to what is good in what is novel. We are grateful for your support, your authorship, and your readership. Thank you for 10 great years!

Reference

Key Words: submissions, impact factor, thematic reviews, acceptance rate, impact factor, online publication, submissions, thematic review series
Figure 5. Trends in geographic distribution of manuscripts received as percentage of total annual submissions for 2000 to 2008. Country of origin is determined by submitting author.
Figure 6. A, Trends in submissions from South Korea, Taiwan and China for 2004 to 2008. B, Trends in acceptance rates from South Korea, Taiwan, and China for 2004 to 2008. Country of origin is determined by submitting author.
Figure 7. Time from submission to first decision by article type (original research articles) 2009 to date.

Figure 8. Time from submission to print publication by article type (original research articles) 2009 to date.
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