

Report of the Editor *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*

The *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* (*AEJ: Applied*, for short) is one of four new journals being launched by the American Economic Association in 2009. *AEJ: Applied* will publish papers covering a broad range of topics in applied economics, with a focus on empirical microeconomic issues. In particular, it covers labor economics and empirical corporate finance; demography; development microeconomics; and health, education, and welfare economics.

Editorial Staff

AEJ: Applied has one Coeditor, Thomas Lemieux (University of British Columbia), to whom I am extremely indebted. We have worked in close collaboration while setting up the policies for *AEJ: Applied*, and this has been a wonderful experience.

The Editors heavily rely on the Board of Editors for evaluation of manuscripts, but also, at this early stage, for general advice, the identification of promising work, and to spread the word about the journal. Board members are selected for their expertise and high level of scholarship in the many different subfields covered by *AEJ: Applied*, and reflect the diversity of methods and topics covered by the journal, to ensure high quality editorship for all manuscripts.

The Board of Editors is comprised of: Jerome Adda (University College London) Joshua Angrist (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), David Autor (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), John Bound (University of Michigan), Marianne Bertrand (University of Chicago, GSB), David Card (University of California, Berkeley), Andrew Foster (Brown University), Brian Jacob (Harvard University, KSG), Chinhui Juhn (University of Houston), Jeffrey Kling (Brookings Institution), Michael Kremer (Harvard University), David Lee (Princeton University), Alan Manning (London School of Economics), Edward Miguel (University of California, Berkeley), Sendhil Mullainathan (Harvard University), Luigi Pistaferri (Stanford University), Imran Rasul (University College

London), Antoinette Schoar, (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), and Duncan Thomas (University of California, Los Angeles).

We want to thank them for their help, as well as for their commitment to making *AEJ: Applied* a great journal, which is reflected in the fact that several of them have already submitted their work.

AEJ: Applied is supported in the Pittsburgh office by Michelle DeBlasi, who has done a fantastic job managing the creation of this new journal and the transition to a new editorial system. Kristina Korade has been a superb assistant. They both deserve many thanks and congratulations. John Siegfried played an instrumental role in getting these journals off the ground, and I thank him, too.

General Nature of the Editorial Process

Manuscripts submitted to *AEJ: Applied* are handled by the Editor, the Coeditor, and the staff located in Pittsburgh. Papers are submitted on-line at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/aej-applied>, using editorial software set up for the journal by Manuscript Central, the same software platform being used by the other new journals and the *AER*. Most subsequent editorial correspondence with referees and authors is done electronically, including the provision of ultimate decision letters and referees' reports to authors.

AEJ: Applied has the same data posting policy as the *AER*. It requires that authors of accepted papers that employ data in econometric exercises, simulation models, or experiments agree to post their data and programs on the journal Web site unless an exemption for proprietary data is requested and granted. Exemptions are generally granted only if the data can be accessed by other researchers in some alternative fashion.

After being processed by the Pittsburgh staff, the manuscripts are distributed by the Editor to Thomas Lemieux or herself for refereeing and a publication decision. Papers are assigned on the basis of field of expertise, combined with a variety of other considerations,

including —equalization of work load and conflict-of-interest rules (papers are generally not assigned to a Coeditor working in the same institution, or if the author was the Coeditor's graduate student). Once assigned, papers are handled by the designated Coeditor or Editor until they are ready for a decision. Rejections are not required to be reviewed by the editor. However, to ensure a fair decision process, all "revise and resubmit" and "accept" decisions require approval of both Editor and Coeditor. In practice, for several "marginal" manuscripts, the decision is made after consultation with the Coeditor.

Manuscripts are reviewed in double-blind fashion: the name of the author is removed from the manuscript before it is sent out for review, and referee names are not revealed to authors. To expedite the decision process, a number of manuscripts are returned to the author without referee review. The decision to return a manuscript without review is based upon a variety of factors, including field considerations (when the field seems to be more appropriate for another *AEJ*, this is mentioned to the author), and the Editor or Coeditor's judgment on the likelihood of being finally accepted for *AEJ: Applied*.

An important innovation is that an author of a manuscript previously submitted to the *AER* can request to have the *AER* file (including *AER* referee comments and cover letter) passed on to the *AEJ* Editor. The author makes this request at the time of submission and gives us the manuscript number of their *AER* submission. The Pittsburgh staff then contacts the original referees for authorization to disclose their names and their cover letters, and uploads the relevant review files. The Editors of *AEJ: Applied* reserve the right to decide on the basis of the previous referees only (and their reading of the paper), or to ask new referees for their opinion. Both methods have been employed at this point. The system has been popular: 10 of the 68 papers submitted as of October 31, 2007, were previously submitted to the *AER* and authors of those papers requested to transfer their files. All the referees have agreed to share their cover letters. Four of these papers have been rejected, and six are in the revise and resubmit stage. Out of the ten decisions, six were made with one or more additional referee(s) (usually only one).

TABLE 1—EDITORIAL STATISTICS, AS OF OCTOBER 31, 2007

Total submissions	68
Revise and Resubmit	10
Summarily Reject (including previous <i>AER</i> submission without new referees)	11
Accepted	1
Rejected	19
Pending Manuscripts	27
Average time to first decision	38 days
Average time to first decision (excluding summary rejections)	53 days

Editorial and Publication Statistics

Table 1 provides basic statistics about the editorial process between July 2007 and October 31, 2007.

As of October 31, 68 papers were submitted to *AEJ: Applied*. The number of submissions per month has been more or less constant (which is probably a sign of growing trend, since the July and August submissions reflected, in part, a stock of latent submissions after the journal was announced).

AEJ: Applied is committed to a rapid decision process and both the referees and the Board of Editors have been remarkably helpful in making this happen. The average time to first decision for papers that have received a first decision is 38 days across all papers (including summary rejections and rejections on the basis of *AER* referee reports). Of the manuscripts sent to referees, the average time to first decision is 53 days. This may not reflect the steady state, since some of the papers have not yet been decided upon and some of the manuscripts were decided upon particularly rapidly at the beginning, but the other information is encouraging. As of October 31, the oldest manuscript had been received on August 16 (and referee reports for this paper were already in). Only two other pending manuscripts had been submitted in (late) August, and one in September. The remaining pending manuscripts were submitted in October. It is our intention to maintain and improve our performance on this front.

The ratio of revise and resubmit to submissions on which a decision has been reached is high: 27 percent. *AEJ: Applied* is committed to shortening the overall review process by giving a revise and resubmit only when the chances of eventual publication are high, so while there are

no data on final acceptance (as of October 31, only one paper was accepted, but no other paper had been resubmitted), this probably indicates a relatively high acceptance ratio.

This ratio will almost certainly decline as time passes, but it reflects the excellent quality of the manuscripts *AEJ: Applied* has received so far. Glenn Ellison (2007)¹ documents the decline over time in the fraction of papers in field journals published by faculty in the top economics departments. In the 13 top field journals, the share of papers written in top field journals by authors in the top 10 departments declined from 4.1 percent between 1990 and 1993 to 3.2 percent between 2000 and 2003. So far, *AEJ: Applied* seems to be reversing this trend, at least

in terms of submissions. Out of the 68 papers submitted as of October 31, the corresponding author was from a top 10 university in 13 cases.

These submission numbers reflect a combination of aggressively pursuing some authors and papers to establish the journal's reputation, and the commitment of the Board of Editors and other senior members of the profession, several of whom have submitted excellent papers. At the same time, as the journal's reputation gets established, we expect to get more and more papers from a broad cross section of the economics profession, and have started seeing this happen already. For instance, the journal has received a number of good submissions from junior faculty: the corresponding author is a junior faculty member in seven out of the ten revise and resubmit papers.

¹ Ellison, Glenn. 2007. "Is Peer Review in Decline?" Unpublished.

ESTHER DUFLO, *Editor*

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