

FROM THE EDITORS

THE ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT ANNALS: LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

In 2007, the first issue of the *Academy of Management Annals* (*AMA*) was published. As we write this “From the Editors,” *AMA* has published its 10th volume and based on its 2015 Impact Factor capturing citations of *AMA* papers, *AMA* is ranked number one in management. How did this happen and where is this heading? In this editorial, we aim to briefly look back to capture some of the key developments that *AMA* has gone through, look forward to highlight some anticipated future developments and emphasize some of the core features that define *AMA*. In doing so, we hope to remove some of the confusion that appears to have surrounded *AMA* (such as that it is not a “real journal”). We also hope to create greater clarity around what *AMA* is looking for in contributions and how this positions *AMA* within the Academy of Management (AOM) journal portfolio (also see the AOM website <http://aom.org/journals/>).

LOOKING BACK: HOW HAS *AMA* CHANGED OVER TIME?

AMA is focused on the publication of integrative reviews of important topics in the management literature. Core to *AMA*'s objective is that these reviews move beyond a description of the field and yield value-added insights through integration and critical assessment of the extant knowledge base. Initially, *AMA* set out to achieve this objective with one issue per year for which contributions were invitation based. Also, as a start-up journal, *AMA* did not have an Impact Factor reflecting citation activity at the time. In the 10 years since its inception, important changes have occurred at *AMA*.

First, under the previous editorship of Sim Sitkin and Laurie Weingart, *AMA* switched from its invitation-based structure to an open submission structure. In this open submission structure, anyone can submit a proposal for an *AMA* paper within preannounced, submission windows. Proposals are peer-reviewed, and authors of accepted proposals (that are often revised after initial submission) are invited to submit the full paper for further review.

In that sense, *AMA* is a journal like any other journal (with the exception that in contrast to many journals, the first round of submissions is proposal based, like in many review-based journals).

Second, *AMA* moved from one issue per year to two issues per year starting with Volume 11 (i.e., 2017). This move has been inspired by *AMA*'s success in attracting high-quality submissions and a desire to publish submissions that meet *AMA*'s quality standards rather than reject high-quality submissions out of space constraints. An additional reason to move to two issues is that it gives authors more flexibility in preparing proposals, with now two submission windows per year.

Third, *AMA* has received an Impact Factor. An Impact Factor is not a goal in and of itself, but helpful as indicative of the way in which *AMA* has established itself as a scholarly journal that invites citation activity and is included in scholarly databases. In reflection of how solidly *AMA* has established its scholarly credentials, *AMA* has become the journal that has the highest Impact Factor of any management journal. With a 2015 2-year Impact Factor of 9.741, *AMA* is ranked first in management.

One reason for us to highlight these three changes is that they are important in addressing the misperception that *AMA* is not a “real journal.” This is a misperception that we still encounter, for instance, in schools' hesitance to recognize faculty publications in *AMA* as counting fully toward tenure and promotion decisions. This misperception probably has its roots in *AMA*'s origin as an invitation-only, one-issue-per-year publication, which may have given *AMA* the feel of an edited volume more than of a peer-reviewed journal. Aside from the fact that several high-ranking outlets in management and allied fields are invitation-only, one-issue-per-year publications, the important point for us to emphasize here is that the current state of affairs is that of an open submission, peer-reviewed, multiple-issues-per-year publication with an Impact Factor and an international editor team and editorial board. *AMA* has no less claim to being a real journal than any of the outlets consistently taken into account in research

quality assessments—and indeed, given its current stature as reflected in its Impact Factor, *AMA* should be considered a journal in the highest evaluation category. Symbolizing this observation, we are also transitioning from the start-up phase in which *AMA* was referred to as the *Annals*, to a naming convention—*AMA*—that is consistent with the naming convention of the other AOM journals.

LOOKING FORWARD: HOW DO WE SEE *AMA* DEVELOP?

By and large, *AMA* is currently making good on its intended objective, and this does not provide a strong impetus for change. We would highlight, however, three areas in which we would like *AMA* develop in years to come.

First, we seek to broaden the range of research areas regularly covered in *AMA*. *AMA* targets contributions from all areas of management. It seems fair to say, nevertheless, that *AMA* contributions to date show a strong emphasis on organizational behavior and organization theory, and probably underrepresent other areas of management research such as strategic management and entrepreneurship. As an open submission journal, *AMA* is dependent on what prospective authors are interested in submitting, but we encourage researchers from all areas of management to consider *AMA* the number one outlet for their integrative reviews of the literature. Further, we have added two new associated editors who specialize in the areas of strategy and entrepreneurship to ensure that submissions in these areas are expertly managed.

Second, we seek to broaden our authorship in two ways. In its years as an invitation-only journal, *AMA* by and large sought contributions by senior authors. Senior authors in the field may typically be better positioned than more junior authors to contribute an integrative and critical review of a field of inquiry, but seniority does not automatically qualify one for such a review, nor does being in an earlier career phase argue against one's ability to contribute such a review. Accordingly, a first way in which we seek to broaden *AMA* authorship is to be more inclusive authors from all career stages. We already see the evidence that *AMA*'s authorship is broadening with the open submission system, and we deliberately focus our reviews and decision of proposals first and foremost on the merits of the proposal itself, and only see the credentials of the authors as a secondary consideration. A second observation in this respect is that the AOM aims to be an organization for the

world, and *AMA* likewise seeks contributions from all over the world. In this respect, we may note that especially in its earlier years, *AMA* saw a strong concentration of Northern American authors. A second way in which we seek to broaden *AMA* authorship therefore is to strive for more global spread of *AMA* authors. Here too we already see that the open submission system has helped broaden *AMA*'s global reach. We strongly encourage researchers from all over the world and from all career stages to consider taking on an *AMA* integrative review.

Third, we seek to broaden the ways people interact with the journal. Print-only publications limit how audiences may interact with a journal, allowing for little more than reading, writing, and reviewing. In the digital age, however, opportunities to connect with journal content in different ways, including through listening to audio and viewing video, are possible. Developing this aspect of journal publishing is a strong focus within the AOM, but also a focus that is still very much emerging and arguably still in a somewhat embryonic state. Increasingly, however, *AMA* should be accessible through a digital platform that does not just offer *AMA* content on an issue-by-issue basis. One development we hope to see is that increasingly journal content will be available on the basis of a host of selection criteria such as keywords, citations, or through curated compilations that are accompanied by expert commentary on paper contributions.

CONTINUITY: WHAT IS CORE TO *AMA*?

We have seen changes over time that have established *AMA* firmly as a top outlet within management and an integral part of the AOM's impressive journal portfolio. We also anticipate some further developments that seek to further establish *AMA* as the number one outlet globally for integrative reviews in management. A third and final issue to consider is what is and remains core to *AMA*, what defines and positions the journal, and what it is that we seek in *AMA* contributions.

The core defining feature of *AMA* is the publication of integrative reviews of research in management. Integrative reviews are understood as reviews of the literature that move beyond description of a body of evidence to derive new insights through integration and/or critique. *AMA* reviews present a clear perspective on the literature that has value-added in terms of theoretical and/or methodological takeaways (although we would not disagree that purely conceptual contributions are more likely to be

published in *AMA* than purely methodological contributions; ideally, methodological considerations would be in the service of deriving conceptual implications, for instance, by suggesting a reconsideration of how the evidence is weighed). To capture the notion that *AMA* reviews present a clear and distinct value-added perspective, *AMA* reviews have been described by previous editors as “reviews with an attitude” and “provocative”; descriptions we gladly second here. An *AMA* review is evidence-based, not an opinion piece, but it is important that *AMA* authors take a stance in terms of what can and cannot be concluded from a review of the evidence. One important element here is that *AMA* reviews would highlight *actionable* insights as key takeaways—what should or should not be studied, how things should or should not be studied, and/or how certain findings should be interpreted. In that sense, *AMA* reviews should both capture the state of the science and be agenda-setting. Another way to convey this same idea is to put it in more operational terms and say that *AMA* authors should aim for their reviews to be cited not primarily as well-articulated inventories of the state of the science, but for what they suggest as a way forward in developing the science.

As a backdrop to these objectives, it is good to consider the value of an integrative review within the broader range of contributions scholars may make to the field. Well-executed integrative reviews probably offer a stronger basis for conclusions that represent the state of the science in a field than any other form of research. The obvious advantage of integrative reviews over primary research is that the former can draw from a much larger evidence base than the latter. Perhaps counterintuitively, integrative reviews also have a number of advantages over meta-analyses. Whereas the advantage of meta-analysis is that it can reach less subjective conclusions through a quantitative integration of findings from primary research, this advantage comes at a price that ultimately renders integrative reviews superior in their ability to draw conclusions that capture the state of the science in a field of research. Meta-analyses are limited to those effects for which a sufficiently large number of observations are available, whereas integrative reviews have the flexibility to incorporate smaller numbers of studies when there is a case of their importance. Meta-analysis is also limited to quantitative evidence in the focal area, whereas integrative reviews have the flexibility to complement this evidence with quantitative evidence from related areas, with insights from qualitative research,

and with insights from theoretical analyses. Whereas meta-analyses thus have the advantage when it comes to reaching strong conclusions about a particular relationship for which there is ample quantitative evidence, integrative reviews have a stronger claim to reach conclusions that accurately capture the state of the science in a field of inquiry. Viewed from that perspective, it is perhaps not surprising that *AMA* is the highest-ranked outlet in Management.

In considering what is core to *AMA*, it is also instructive to consider what *AMA* is *not*. A first thing to note here is that even though *AMA* probably values contributions to theory above all else, *AMA* is not an outlet for theory papers. In a theory development paper, a review of the evidence primarily sets the stage for new theory development. At least in practice, a defining quality of such new theory development is that the new theoretical propositions are as yet untested. Ultimately, *AMA* contributions would often also arrive through an integration of the evidence at new and as yet untested insights, but the balance between review of the evidence and new insights is different for integrative reviews versus theory papers. For studies in which the emphasis is on the evidence base, *AMA* is a potential outlet; for studies in which the emphasis is on the new theory, *AMA* is not an appropriate outlet. Even though *AMA* seeks “reviews with an attitude,” the emphasis is firmly on a review of the evidence base; *AMA* thus is not an outlet for essays or opinion pieces.

Finally, in considering what is core to *AMA*, it is instructive to consider how *AMA* fits into the broader journal portfolio of the AOM. The AOM publishes three empirical journals (*Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Discoveries*, and *Academy of Management Learning and Education*), and *AMA* is obviously distinct from these in not publishing empirical research (whereas these journals do not publish integrative reviews). The AOM also publishes two other nonempirical journals, and it may be good to briefly capture how *AMA* is positioned in reference to these two other outlets. First, there is the *Academy of Management Review* (*AMR*), which publishes theory papers. As per the previous paragraph, the difference between *AMA* and *AMR* would be one in emphasis: whereas both prioritize new conceptual insights with a clear basis in evidence, the evidence base receives much greater emphasis in *AMA* and the new conceptual insights receive much greater emphasis in *AMR*. Second, there is the *Academy of Management Perspectives* (*AMP*). *AMP* is the journal focused on audiences other than management scholars and makes insights from

management research accessible to these other audiences. The focus is more on making the evidence accessible than on the development of theory. *AMA* thus is positioned vis-à-vis *AMP* in that *AMA*'s primary audience is management scholars and it puts high value on new theoretical insights as a key contribution of the integrative reviews it publishes.

IN CONCLUSION

In short then, with its first 11 volumes published *AMA* has established itself as a major influential outlet in the field of management. We believe *AMA* has achieved this position by publishing authoritative assessments of research areas in management

that both yield value-added conceptual insights and suggest a clear way forward in developing the field. We also see *AMA* as well positioned to maintain and develop this influential role in research in management by broadening its coverage of the management field as well as its author base and by developing the possibilities offered by its digital platform. More than ever before, therefore, we suggest that there is a clear invitation to develop contributions to *AMA*.

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