

Publish and be analysed

DEAR SIRs

The *Journal* changes in format and content over the years. Changes in format are abrupt and unmistakable. Changes in content are less perceptible and leave only impressions. To check my impressions I have analysed some measurable aspects of the content of one sample year of Journals from late in the reign of each of its last three Editors: Slater (1970), Hare (1976) and Crammer (1982). The findings are shown in the Table.

One runs into unexpected snags. People move to other jobs or other countries between doing a piece of work and publishing it; I have used the job or country to which the study belongs. Some papers have dual or even triple nationality. In distinguishing between prestigious and other institutions I have included in the former category academic and research places such as Universities, the Institute of Psychiatry, the Bethlem-Maudsley, teaching hospitals, Northwick Park and MRC units. A University team researching in an ordinary hospital counts as prestigious, but a Consultant with an Honorary Lectureship at the local University does not.

The system of logging acceptance of papers changed in the middle of 1976. Until April of that year they were just 'received' on a certain date. Since then dates of first receipt and final acceptance have usually been recorded (the eleven

papers lacking these details have been left out of consideration). For this reason I cannot be sure that I have compared like with like in specifying the receipt-publication interval in 1970 and the acceptance-publication interval in 1982—though the gradient through 1976 suggests that I have.

The table shows various trends. The *Journal* remains the same length, but papers are shorter and more standard sized. More papers from abroad (especially the USA) are published and more foreign countries contribute. There has been a decline in the number of papers from ordinary hospitals and other purely clinical units. The interval to publication has apparently been reduced dramatically. Only one paper in three is accepted without revision. In nearly all respects 1976 data are intermediate between 1970 and 1982. My impressions are confirmed. Whither next?

ROGER MORGAN

*St Wulstans Hospital
Malvern, Worcs.*

A Luddite View?

DEAR SIRs

We write as two trainees who passed the Preliminary Test of the MRCPsych in February and are very interested in the development of psychiatry as a science, and also, as two people who have spent a fair proportion of their youth study-

TABLE
Analysis of three years of papers in British Journal of Psychiatry

	1970	1976	1982	
Number of papers	172	164	187	
Number of pages: Total in year	1081	1096	1087	
Mean per paper	6.28	6.68	5.81**	
SD	3.69	3.56	2.33	
Range	1-21	2-23	2-16	
Country of origin (percentages): UK	67	65	56*	
Abroad	33	35	44*	
USA	11	14	20*	
Number of different foreign countries	15	18	24	
Institute of origin of UK papers (percentages): Prestigious	63	76*	78*	
Ordinary	37	24	22	
Interval between receipt/acceptance and publication (months): Mean	12.85	<i>Jan-Apr</i> 10.42***	<i>May-Dec</i> 8.79***	6.65***
SD	3.95	1.42	1.62	1.63
Range	4-26	6-13	5-14	4-14
Percentage revised	—	—	65	66

* P<0.05 compared with 1970

** P<0.01 compared with 1976

*** P<0.001 compared with 1970

Significances were calculated from raw data not percentages.