

RESEARCH YOU CAN USE

Come Home to *JAPA*

The name of this column, Research You Can Use, may suggest that it is only for practicing planners. That has never been the case. Its purpose has always been to narrow the gap between the academy and practice, and that can work in either direction. ACSP (the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning) has 1,500 members at 130 schools. APA has about 40,000 members. So about three of every 100 planners are academics. The first part of this commentary is aimed at them; the rest is for the 97 percent who are practitioners.

The *Journal of the American Planning Association* has had some problems in the past couple of years, including long delays in reviewing submissions. Things like that are particularly frustrating for junior faculty, who count on publication to make their case for tenure. In response to my call for input on this topic, one junior faculty member suggested that I use the column to explain to junior faculty why they should even submit their research to *JAPA*.

Here are some reasons, suggested by several senior academics, not just me. *JAPA* has the second highest impact factor among 37 urban studies journals. The impact factor refers to the number of times journal articles are cited in the peer-reviewed literature, averaged over the number of published articles. While the journal's impact factor is declining, it is expected to rebound under its new editors.

As recently as 2010, *JAPA* had the best reputation of all the journals in the field, according to an article by Harvey Goldstein and Gunther Maier on the use and valuation of journals in planning scholarship (published in the *Journal of Planning Education and Research* in September 2010). *JAPA*'s reputation is sure to bounce back, said Marlon Boarnet of USC in his reply to my request for input on this column.

Shorter wait

The queue at *JAPA* is now far shorter than it was—albeit for the wrong reasons (including lost papers and reviews). The current (interim) editors, Sandra Rosenbloom

and Tim Chapin, are getting papers out for peer review quickly and making their decisions at top speed. There may never be a better time to submit a manuscript to the journal.

JAPA is the only academic journal that reaches planning practitioners in significant numbers. Practitioners can subscribe at the time they renew their APA memberships, and many do so. With more than 6,900 subscribers, the journal still can count more practitioners among its readers than academics.

as they developed over a long time. . . . *JAPA* publications had something to do with my gaining tenure and much to do with helping develop my scholarly identity," she wrote.

Best reason

Perhaps the best reason to publish in *JAPA* is that the planning community is our home and our identity. More narrowly focused journals may be more rigorous and have higher impact factors than the interdisciplinary *JAPA*. But I agree with Jack Kartesz of the University of Southern

Maine, who says it is important for planning academics to stick with *JAPA* and other planning journals because "we need to keep a distinct few outlets for the promotion of planning thought and for the good of the professional community."

In fact, *JAPA* was once dominated by practicing planners, as I found in reviewing back issues. All the articles in the first special issue on transportation, in 1959, were written by practitioners, as were most of the articles

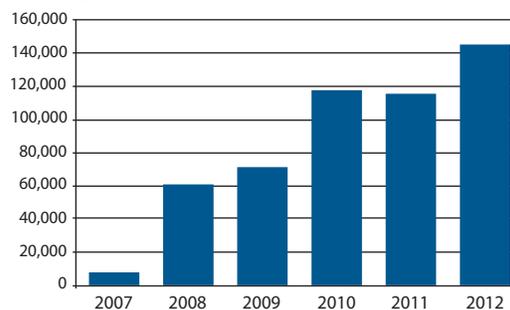
in the second transportation issue in 1982. By the time of the third special issue, in 1995, the journal had become the domain of academic researchers, who outnumbered practitioners seven to one. The transportation issue I edited in 2006 consisted entirely of academics.

Our message to all of you, practitioners and disgruntled academics alike, is, "Come home to *JAPA*." Practitioners unsure of academic writing conventions may want to team up with professorial types, but no matter how you do it, this is sure to be a win-win for both parties. I recently coauthored articles with three different practitioners: Jerry Walters of Fehr & Peers Transportation Consultants, John Thomas of EPA, and Meghan Bogaerts of the U.S. Green Building Council. In each case, the final product was much enhanced by their involvement.

—Reid Ewing

Ewing is a professor of city and metropolitan planning at the University of Utah and an associate editor of JAPA. More than 30 of his past columns are available at www.plan.utah.edu/?page_id=509.

JAPA Downloads



SOURCE: Taylor & Francis

Many of the more practice-oriented articles are downloaded thousands of times—and we can assume that it is working planners who are doing most of the downloading. The most viewed download in 2011 was the article by Dowell Myers and Sung Ho Ryu called "Aging Baby Boomers and the Generational Housing Bubble: Foresight and Mitigation of an Epic Transition." It seems every planner is now aware of its thesis: that there will be a glut of large houses as aging baby boomers downsize and that planners need to provide for more compact housing alternatives. Where else can academics have such an impact on practice?

Publishing in *JAPA* has helped to further the careers of countless planners, myself included. Eugenie Birch, FAICP, of the University of Pennsylvania, a former *JAPA* coeditor, was one of those who responded to my call for input on this column. "I just looked at the articles that I published in *JAPA* over the years, and much to my surprise, they tracked my scholarly interests