

Report of the Editor

American Economic Journal: Applied Economics

The *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* (*AEJ Applied*, for short) is one of the four new journals launched by the American Economic Association in July 2007. We have now completed our first full calendar year, and the first issue was published in January 2009, one of four issues published in 2009.

AEJ Applied publishes papers covering a broad range of topics in applied economics, with a focus on empirical microeconomic issues. In particular it covers labor economics, development microeconomics, health, education, demography, empirical corporate finance, empirical studies of trade, and empirical behavioral economics. A list of accepted and forthcoming papers is available on the *AEJ Applied* Web site. In the first issue, there are three papers on development economics, two papers on higher education, three papers on labor economics, one on health economics, and one on empirical political economy. In forthcoming issues, we will also have papers on behavioral economics, history, and primary and secondary education.

Editorial Staff

AEJ Applied has one coeditor, Thomas Lemieux (University of British Columbia), to whom I am extremely indebted. We work in very close collaboration to make the *AEJ Applied* a first-rate journal and offer authors fast and efficient service.

The Editor heavily relies on the Board of Editors for evaluation of manuscripts, but also, at this early stage, for general advice, the identification of promising work, and spreading the word on 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 members of the Board of Editors are: Jerome Adda (University College London), Joshua Angrist (MIT), Abhijit Banerjee (MIT), John Bound (University of Michigan),

Marianne Bertrand (Chicago), David Card (UC Berkeley), Raymond Fisman (Columbia), Andrew Foster (Brown), Gordon Hanson (UCSD), Brian Jacob (University of Michigan), Chinhui Juhn (University of Houston), Jeffrey Kling (Brookings Institution), Michael Kremer (Harvard), David Lee (Princeton University), Alan Manning (LSE), Edward Miguel (UC Berkeley), Robert Margo (Boston University), Sendhil Mullainathan (Harvard), Luigi Pistaferri (Stanford), Imran Rasul (University College London), Antoinette Schoar (MIT), and Duncan Thomas (UCLA).

We want to thank David Autor (MIT), who stepped down from the Board of Editors to take the editorship of the *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, and Rohini Pande (Harvard), who stepped down to join the board of the *American Economic Review*.

We want to thank the Board members 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 to the journal.

AEJ Applied is supported in the Pittsburgh office by Managing Editor Michelle DeBlasi and editorial assistant Kelly Markel, whom we thank for their excellent and tireless support.

General Nature of the Editorial Process

All manuscripts published by the *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* are regular submissions and go through the full refereeing process. Manuscripts are handled by the editor, the coeditor, and the staff located in Pittsburgh. Papers are submitted online electronically at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/aej-applied>, using editorial software set up for the journal by Manuscript Central, the same software platform used by the other new journals and also by the *AER*. Most subsequent editorial correspondence with referees and authors is done electronically, including the provision of decision letters and referee 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 office staff, the editor and coeditor then assign referees and ultimately make a decision on publication. 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 written while 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 also taken after joint consultation.

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 papers are returned to the author without referee review. The decision to return a manuscript without review is based upon a variety of considerations, including field considerations (when the field seems to be more appropriate for another *AEJ*, this is mentioned to the author), and on judgment of the editor or coeditor on the likelihood of being accepted.

An important innovation is that an author of a manuscript previously submitted to the *AER* can elect to request to have the *AER* file (referees's comments and cover letters) passed on to the *AEJ* editor. This is done by answering a question on the submission Web site, and supplying the *AER* manuscript number. 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. From November 2007 to October 2008, we received 33 submissions through this channel. All of the *AER* referees agreed to share their reports. We asked for a revision of six of these papers, and three have already been accepted. In 17 cases, we rejected the papers on the basis of the *AER* reports, allowing for a decision within one or two weeks. Only ten papers have been rejected after asking additional referee advice.

Editorial and Publication Statistics

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

Between October 31, 2007, and November 1, 2008, 228 papers were submitted to *AEJ Applied* (first submissions only). The number of monthly submissions has been increasing steadily over time, from an average of 16.3 per month between July and October 2007 to 25 per month between July and October 2008.

AEJ Applied is committed to a rapid decision process and the referees and 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 38.5 days across all papers (including summary rejections and papers rejected on the basis of *AER* referee reports). Including only the manuscripts sent to referees, the average time to first decision is 52 days. These numbers are very similar to the 2007 numbers (38 days and 53 days, respectively). We are working hard, with exceptionally good cooperation from the referees, to maintain a rapid turnaround and avoid tails. Seventy-nine percent of the submissions were handled within two months, and nearly all of them within three months. Only three submissions took a little over three months.

The ratio of revise and resubmit to submissions on which a decision has been reached is 13 percent (lower than in 2007 (27 percent), but still relatively high). *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 the final acceptance ratio is high: virtually all the first revise and resubmit papers that have been resubmitted have either been accepted or have been sent for a second (often fairly minor) revision.

TABLE 1—EDITORIAL STATISTICS, NOVEMBER 1, 2007–OCTOBER 31, 2008

Total submissions	265
Total first submissions	228
Decisions: Out of first submissions	
Percentage summarily rejected (including previous <i>AER</i> submission without new referees)	27
Percentage rejected	50
Percentage revise and resubmit	12.9
Percentage pending	9.8
Decision times: First submissions	
Average days to first decision (for manuscripts with decisions)	38.5
Average days to first decision (excluding summary rejections)	52
Longest decision time	101
Percentage of decisions made within one month	38
Percentage of decisions made between one and two months	41
Percentage of decisions made between two and three months	19
Percentage of decisions made in more than three months	1.5
Decisions: Out of second submissions	
Percentage accepted	43
Percentage revise and resubmit	54
Percentage rejected	2.7
Decision times: Revisions	
Average days to decision, for revised manuscripts	11.7
Percentage of second decisions made within one month	94.6
Percentage of decisions made between one and two months	5.4

AEJ Applied has received submissions from authors from a variety of institutions. Twenty-three percent of the submissions have come from authors at top-ten departments (as against 3.2 percent in 2000–2003 in other leading field journals, Glenn Ellison 2007¹); the rest are from a large cross section of departments and schools (including universities in Europe and in the developing world). The journal attracts junior and senior authors: 51 percent of the first authors are junior

faculty or graduate students. We are particularly happy to have received a number of strong submissions by junior authors (41.4 percent of the revise and resubmit papers had a corresponding author who was a junior faculty member).

These submission numbers reflect a combination of soliciting promising submissions, the commitment of the Board of Editors and other senior members of the profession, and (we hope) the growing reputation of the journal, in particular, for fast turnaround. We are particularly grateful to all the referees for making this possible.

¹ Glenn, Ellison MIT Working Paper, 2000. “Is Peer Review in Decline?”

ESTHER DUFLO, *Editor*