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Letter from the Editor

Impact factor for a journal and impact of an author: are they the same?

Many of you may have noted that the "impact factor" (IF) for *Building Environment* increased from 0.686 in 2006, 0.852 in 2007, and 1.192 in 2008 to 1.797 in 2009. According to Wikipedia [1], IF "is a measure reflecting the average number of citations to articles published in science and social science journals. It is frequently used as a proxy for the relative importance of a journal within its field, with journals with higher impact factors deemed to be more important than those with lower ones." According to this definition, IF could be a measure of my performance as editor-in-chief compared with the performance of our sister journals in the field. Since I began my tenure as editor in 2007, only the IF in 2009 partially reflects my work. The increase in IF in the previous years, in fact, reflects the trend in citation practices (IFs for most journals have increased in the past few years) and the work done by the previous editors. I do not want to take this credit from them.

I was in China when I learned about IF for the first time. IF was devised by the US scientist, Eugene "Gene" Garfield [2]. IF is a lesser concern in many universities in the United States compared with in many universities in Asia. When I was at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, good journals were those subscribed to by the university library. At that time, the library checked if a journal was referred to frequently to determine if the library should subscribe to it. That was in the pre-web era. At the School of Mechanical Engineering at Purdue University, the faculty makes the determinations about good journals themselves. Also, a journal's reputation is not linked to a specific author. However, the policy in many Asian universities has effectively encouraged authors to submit their manuscripts to journals with a high IF.

Since IF was designed to measure the performance of a journal, not an author's performance, an author should publish his/her paper in a journal that is most relevant to his/her work. If the author publishes a paper in a journal with a high IF but nobody reads or cites the paper, the actual impact could still approach zero. Even if a paper is published in a non-SCI journal but is very relevant, such as a paper concerning air conditioning systems in ASHRAE Transactions, the paper can have a very high citation rate and, thus, a significant impact. So if an author really cares about his/her impact, the citations to his/her papers could be more important than the actual journal in which he/she has published. The use of citations as a measure of one's impact will also discourage publishing similar papers, as none of them would have a high citation rate.

An editor could inflate the IF for a journal if a higher IF is the goal. For example, an editor could ask the authors to cite papers published in his/her journals. An editor could even cite all the papers published in his/her journal every year in an editorial. This would increase the impact factor of the journal by one. Well, I am not sure that this is a good idea, so I would avoid doing so. I would like to see improvement in the quality of the papers published by *Building and Environment*. Only high quality papers will really make an impact on the community through the journal and the authors. I hope you agree.

Again, I am very pleased to announce the following three papers which received a "2010 Best Paper Award" from *Building and Environment*:

- Frédéric Haldi and Darren Robinson, On the unification of thermal perception and adaptive actions, *Building and Environment* 2010;**45**(11):2440-2457.
- Yoshihide Tominaga and Ted Stathopoulos, Numerical simulation of dispersion around an isolated cubic building: Model evaluation of RANS and LES, *Building and Environment* 2010;**45**(10):2231-2239.
- Joonghoon Lee, Doosam Song, and Dongryul Park, A study on the development and application of the E/V shaft cooling system to reduce stack effect in high-rise buildings, *Building and Environment* 2010;**45**(2):311-319.

Please note that Frédéric Haldi and Darren Robinson received "2009 Best Paper Award" from Building and Environment as well. In addition, the first author of the following paper, E. Lobutova, received the "2010 Best Paper Award for a Young Author":

- E. Lobutova, C. Resagk, and T. Putze, Investigation of large-scale circulations in room air flows using three-dimensional particle tracking velocimetry, *Building and Environment* 2010;**45**(7):1653-1662.

I would like to congratulate the authors for their great achievements. The journal receives almost 1000 submissions every year, but publishes only about 250 papers of these submissions per year. These papers represent very fine examples of quality work and we are very proud to publish them. It is highly competitive to win such a great honor.

These papers were selected by the Best Paper Award Committee, consisting of Malcolm Cunningham (Chair), David Etheridge, Chao-Hsin Lin, and Takao Sawachi, according to the nominations by the Advisory Board of the journal and reviewers' comments. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Best Paper Award Committee, the Advisory Board, and all the reviewers for their

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