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Thirty years of academic publishing in regional studies: A content analysis of MCRSA's scholarly output

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Abstract. For thirty years, the Mid-continent Regional Science Association has published high-quality scholarly papers on topics of relevance to regional studies. First as *Regional Science Perspectives* and then as the *Journal of Regional Analysis and Policy*, contributors to the Journal, have furthered our understanding of the economic, geographic and political aspects of regional growth and change. In this paper, we compile, analyze, and summarize the Journal's content over the past thirty years. As co-editors, we provide our perspectives of where we currently are and, to some extent, where we are going. But since the quality of a scholarly journal reflects the excellence of its contributors, it truly reflects the abilities of regional scientists to craft their own visions of regional studies.

1. Introduction

Over the course of the past thirty years, the Mid-continent Regional Science Association has published almost 6,000 pages of academic text on topics of interest to regional studies. In almost 350 individual articles, contributors have expanded our academic understanding in critical regional issues and analysis of important regional policies. These take the form of economic, geographic, sociologic, and environmental aspects that underlie the analysis of regions.

The intent of this article is to showcase the Association's academic output and to raise several issues pertinent to publishing research in regional studies. As will be shown, the past 30 years has been a period of great dynamism, vibrancy, and eclecticism in academic pursuit. This is not unique to our Association but is endemic to regional science as a dis-

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cipline and has been witnessed elsewhere within regional science circles (Durden and Knox 2000). This broadly encompassing focus on regions and regional change reflects the interdisciplinary nature of our work as regional scientists that has taken place during the past 50 or so years since the inception of regional science as an independent field of academic inquiry in the mid-1950's (Isserman 1995; Kirk 1995).

In an attempt to summarize the journal's content over the past 30 years, we spent time scanning, reading, categorizing, and labeling previously published articles from the complete journal library. We attempted to retain literal interpretations of what was found. This, at times, got fuzzy; particularly in categorizing thematic focus and research method employed by the authors. Each article was categorized into a single thematic and method category with additional keywords used to distinguish detail. As a guide to categorization schemes, we arrived at thematic labels and research methods employed from several alternative sources. With minor adaptation, these categories are generally comparable to those used in *The International Regional Science Review*, *The Journal of Economic Literature*, and *The Journal of Planning Literature*. For use in categorizing the content of articles, the following thematic labels were used:

- Public economics, regional policy/planning, local government, fiscal health
- Health, education, and welfare
- Factor markets (labor, land, capital)
- Demographics and migration
- Housing and real estate
- Industrial organization, structure, interaction, and business cycles
- Agricultural economics
- Natural resources, environment, and recreation
- Energy
- Development economics, technological change, and regional growth models
- Production analysis, firm location, and attraction of firms to regions
- Transportation analysis and land use
- Spatial organization
- History of regional science and pedagogy

Furthermore, the research methods employed by authors of articles were categorized following similar approaches used in other related journals. Again, there was a certain amount of imprecision associated with this labeling exercise. It became especially problematic when mul-

multiple methods were employed. We did, however, attempt to categorize each article into one primary method using the following scheme:

- Descriptive regional projection techniques (location quotient, shift-share, etc.)
- Econometric & regression-based inferential models
- Input-output & social accounting models
- Equilibrium models
- Mathematical programming/optimization
- Population projections, simulation, game & bargaining theory, factor/cluster analysis
- Survey-based regional data collection & estimation methods
- Qualitative methods, regional theory building, & review articles
- Cost/benefit analysis

The structure and content of this paper follows similar content reviews published recently (Durden and Knox 2000; Woods, et al. 1989). We begin with an overview of the extent of articles published in the Mid-continent Regional Science Association's official publication, *The Journal of Regional Analysis and Policy* (until 1996, this journal was entitled *Regional Science Perspectives* and was re-titled to more clearly reflect the content of academic inquiry and makeup of the Association.) This overview includes the number and types of articles published. We then outline and analyze the journal's content for thematic focus of articles published and a broad look at the research methods employed by authors. The third section contains a summary of contributors including rankings by page length and affiliation of authors. Finally, we discuss these results with respect to where we, as editors, feel the journal has been, where it currently stands, and where we would like it to move in the future.

2. An Overview of the First 30 Volumes

During the past 30 years, there have been a total of 29 volumes (52 issues) of the journal published. This includes 25 volumes (44 issues) of *Regional Science Perspectives* (between 1970 and 1995) and 4 volumes (8 issues) of the *Journal of Regional Analysis and Policy*. The journal began with the first six volumes being published once per year. In 1977 (Volume 7), the journal was expanded to a twice-per-year publication schedule and has remained at two issues per volume ever since. A summary of published works in the Journal can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. A summary of published works in the *Journal of Regional Analysis and Policy* (formerly *Regional Science Perspectives*) between 1971 and 1999.

Number of issues published	52
Number of articles published	341
Number of article pages published	5,569
Overall average page length of articles	16.3
Number of book reviews published	34
Number of software reviews published	1

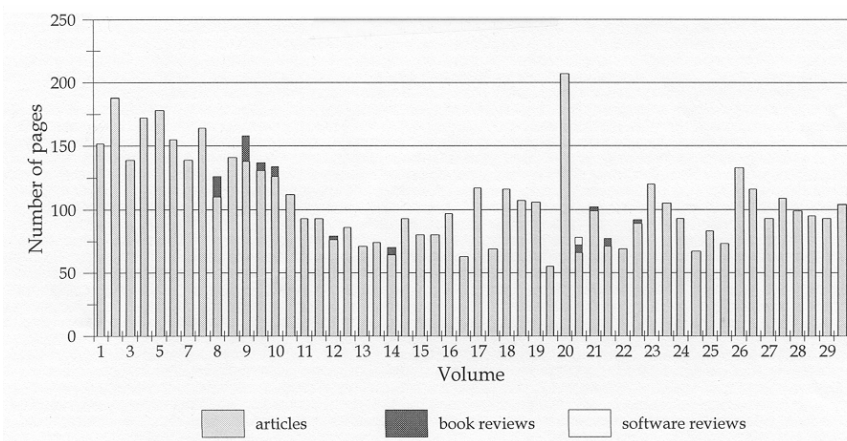


Figure 1. Page length of issue by type of material published, RSP/JRAP, 1971-1999.

A total of 341 articles have been published in the first 29 volumes. This equates to just over 5,500 total pages of text¹. The page length of each issue is summarized in Figure 1. Early on, the length of each issue tended to be slightly higher due, in large part, to a higher number of articles contained in each issue. This is due, at least partly, to the once-per-year publication schedule.

The number of articles and average page length of articles is summarized in Figure 2. It can be noted from the Figure that articles published

¹ The journal's format has been modified slightly over time but remains within a roughly 6" X 9" book format, single spaced, with an overall font size of roughly 10 pitch. Thus, the word count per page has remained roughly the same throughout the course of the journal's publishing history. Some fluctuation in page length over time is apparent and probably reflects change within overall academic norms.

in the first 29 volumes exhibited slight variation in page length over time. The overall average page length of each article was roughly 16 pages but has probably grown slightly over time given changing academic norms. The number of articles has also changed over time. Early on, each issue contained 6 to 12 articles. During the 1980's, the number of articles tapered off to a range of 4 to 6. Gradually, during the 1990's this number of articles per issue has increased slightly to a range of 5 to 8. Today, we consider a full issue to contain at least 5 articles with a total page length of at least 100 pages. It is our hope, as editors, to expand the number of articles and page length of each issue. Key to this, however, is the up-front receipt of good quality manuscripts to usher through the double-blind review process.

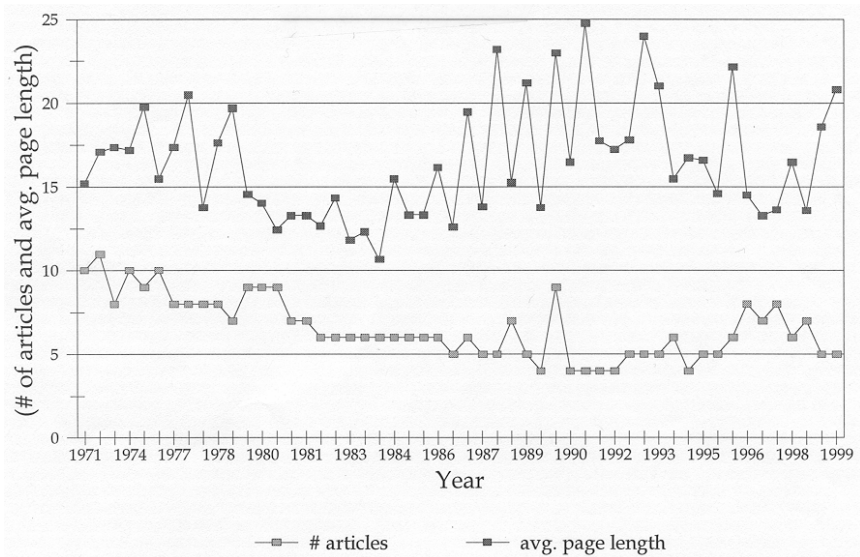


Figure 2. Number and average page length of articles published in the RSP/JRAP, 1971-1999.

3. The Content of Published Articles

The results of our thematic and method categorization suggest interesting insights into who we are and what we view as publishable. The number of articles by thematic focus and method employed by author are summarized in Table 2. As can be seen from the Table, we have published our interests broadly among those themes found important to regional scientists. The largest categories of thematic focus include “development economics, technological change, and growth models”

(roughly 15 percent of the articles) and “industrial organization, structure, and interaction” (another 15 percent of the articles).

Table 2. Number of articles by themes addressed and methods employed published in *RSP / JRAP*, Volumes 1 through 29 (1970 – 1999).

Theme Addressed	Method employed						
	Descript. regional methods	Econometric	I/O, RGE	Math prog & optimization	Pop proj. & factor anal.	Surveys & CBA	Regional theory building & rev.
Economic policy	3	15	1	3	1	10	4
Health & educ.	2	8	0	0	2	0	1
Labor	2	21	3	1	1	2	0
Demographics	0	10	1	0	7	5	5
Housing	1	7	0	0	0	2	6
Indust. structure	16	20	9	2	1	0	3
Agric. prod.	0	2	1	3	0	1	1
Natural resource	3	12	7	7	4	1	8
Energy	2	3	1	0	2	2	0
Econ. develop.	12	16	6	1	2	5	10
Firm location	2	4	0	0	2	0	2
Transportation	0	3	0	5	0	1	1
Spatial org.	3	10	1	4	2	0	4
Hist. & pedagogy	0	0	0	0	0	1	9
TOTAL	46	131	30	26	24	30	54

With respect to method employed by author, results suggest that we overwhelmingly tend to publish articles that are based on analysis which is inferential in-nature. Again, from the Table, we note that econometric and regression-based models represent the method employed within almost 40 percent of the published articles during the past 30 years of the journal. Interestingly, less than 10 percent of the papers published during this time-frame were based on analysis using input-output, SAMs, or regional equilibrium models, standard accounting approaches used in regional analysis.

Another topic representing the more reflective aspects of regional science includes critical evaluations of work in-the-field (e.g. books, software, and teaching). During the past 30 years, there have been 34 book

book reviews and one software review published. These are not counted in the previous article categorizations.

4. Contributors to the Journal

An important part of our content review focused on who contributed to the journal during the course of its existence. In summarizing contributors, we compiled and analyzed appearances (authorship) in the journal. This was done for all contributors to the journal with a distinguishing aspect involved in joint authorship. To clarify data on appearances, we present both total appearances and an adjusted number of appearances that reflect the extent to which joint authorship of articles was persistent. This summary is contained in Table 3 and is ranked by total number of adjusted pages published by author.

Contributors to the journal originate from a wide variety of disciplines. These are summarized in Figure 3 for all authors (including multiple appearances). In summarizing the employer affiliation of contributors, results suggest that we are, by and large, a group of academics affiliated within university departments. Fully 85 percent of contributors were affiliated with a university at the time of publishing. The predominant category of academic discipline at the time of publishing was economics (including agricultural economics) which comprised fully 65 percent of author affiliations. University-based departments of geography, planning, public administration, and business administration accounted for another 20 percent of the employer affiliations. About 10 percent of authors were employed in the public sector but not affiliated with a university (e.g. Federal Reserve Bank, USDA, etc.) while almost 3 percent of contributors were employed in the non-university private sector.

5. Summary and Implications for Future Publishing Directions

In this article, we have summarized the publication experience of the Mid-continent Regional Science Association as reflected in its official scholarly publication, the *Journal of Regional Analysis and Policy* (formerly *Regional Science Perspectives*). This is done as a content analysis focusing on both what was published and the authorship of those who contributed. Specifically, we outline the history of the journal in terms of page length, number of entries, theme addressed, method used, and two contributor characteristics; author appearance and affiliation.

Table 3. Authors published multiple times in *RSP* /*JRAP* ranked by adjusted and total number of pages (Volumes 1 through 29, 1970 through 1999).

Rank by no. of adjusted published pages	Author	Total no. of published pages	Rank by no. of total published pages	Adjusted no. of published pages	Number of Articles
1	Roger F. Riefler	187	2	129.2	10
2	David P. Varady	95	8	92.5	5
3	Sakara Jutila	96	7	88.0	5
4	Dean F. Schreiner	205	1	81.9	8
5	Paul Kochanowski	102	4	80.0	7
6	Wilbur R. Maki	99	5	77.3	7
7	Paul J. Kozlowski	92	10	72.5	5
8	Donald Steinnes	93	9	58.7	6
9	R. Bradley Hoppes	69	16	56.0	5
10	Robert Kirk	55	25	55.0	4
11	Richard Lichty	135	3	50.2	8
13	George C. Galster	48	33	48.0	3
14	Bruce Domazlicky	48	32	48.0	3
15	Steven C. Deller	97	6	47.5	7
16	James A. MacMillan	69	17	46.0	3
17	James. R. Prescott	59	21	44.5	4
18	Edward Nissan	52	28	43.0	4
19	Orley Amos	58	22	42.0	4
21	F. Charles Lamphear	88	11	40.0	6
22	Stanley R. Keil	48	34	37.3	2
23	R. Keith Semple	74	14	37.0	4
25	M. Jarvin Emerson	55	26	36.0	3
26	David W. Marcouiller	76	12	34.3	4
27	Raymond Raab	65	19	34.3	4
28	J.R. Barnard	61	20	33.3	3
30	Alenka S. Giese	47	36	31.7	2
31	Michael T. Peddle	36	49	31.0	3
32	Wilford L. L'Esperance	70	15	30.0	3
33	Jerrold M. Peterson	30	67	30.0	2
34	Randall G. Krieg	45	39	28.0	4
35	Norman R. Cloutier	28	72	28.0	2
36	Edward J. Malecki	27	78	27.0	2
37	W.C. Lewis	53	27	26.5	3
38	Charles F. Framingham	58	23	26.3	3
39	Thomas R. Harris	76	13	26.0	4
40	Robert Premus	31	63	26.0	2
44	George H. Carter	34	55	25.0	2
46	Earl O. Heady	56	24	23.5	4
47	Richard J. Cebula	29	68	23.5	3
48	Mark Jelavich	23	107	23.0	2
50	Norman Walzer	50	29	22.5	4
51	Warren T. Dent	49	31	21.3	2
52	Tim C. Ireland	42	41	21.0	2
53	Andrew Krmeneč	27	79	21.0	2
55	Young-Kon Koh	67	18	20.8	2
56	David C. Chicoine	40	42	20.0	3
57	Peter M. Hutchinson	38	47	20.0	3
58	James P. LaSage	28	73	20.0	2
69	Lawrence K. Lynch	18	167	18.0	2
72	Richard S. Mack	40	43	17.3	3
73	Alok K. Bohara	34	56	17.0	3
74	Allen J. Scafuri	17	193	17.0	2
76	Roger A. Matson	40	44	16.3	2
78	Jon R. Miller	21	129	16.0	2
83	James R. Gale	31	64	15.5	2
84	Mark S. Henry	31	65	15.5	2
85	Ronald J. Dorf	34	57	15.3	2
91	Martin Shields	34	58	14.5	2
93	Wayne Bartholomew	36	50	14.0	2
98	Thomas R. MacDiarmid	46	37	13.5	2

Table 3. Continued

Rank by no. of adjusted published pages	Author	Total no. of published pages	Rank by no. of total published pages	Adjusted no. of published pages	Number of Articles
99	Chang K. Seung	46	38	13.5	2
100	David Henderson	32	62	13.3	2
103	Janet M. Rives	26	86	13.0	2
117	Scott Loveridge	29	70	12.8	2
118	Dan Singer	25	98	12.5	2
121	Frank L. Hefner	18	171	12.5	2
122	William Fleishman	40	45	12.0	2
123	Wayne A. Jesswein	40	46	12.0	2
140	George W. Morse	34	59	11.3	2
141	John Gruidl	34	60	11.3	2
142	Tugrul T. Temel	28	74	11.2	2
143	R.S. Johnson	22	116	111.0	2
156	Curt L. Anderson	29	71	10.5	2
164	J.R. Schmidt	24	103	10.3	2
166	M. Henry Robison	20	136	10.0	2
182	J. David Reed	27	81	9.0	2
183	James R. Ostas	27	80	9.0	2
184	J. Murray	22	124	9.0	2
242	Merlin M. Hackbart	15	258	7.5	2
260	John E. Connaughton	14	286	7.0	2
261	Ronald A. Madsen	14	281	7.0	2

¹ This ranking includes all articles published while this table only includes those with authors who have appeared multiple times in the journal; ties have not been demarked.

² Total number of pages is calculated by summing pages of all articles, in which author appears regardless of number of authors.

³ Adjusted number of pages is calculated by summing pages of all articles, in which author appears after dividing the number of pages by the number of authors.

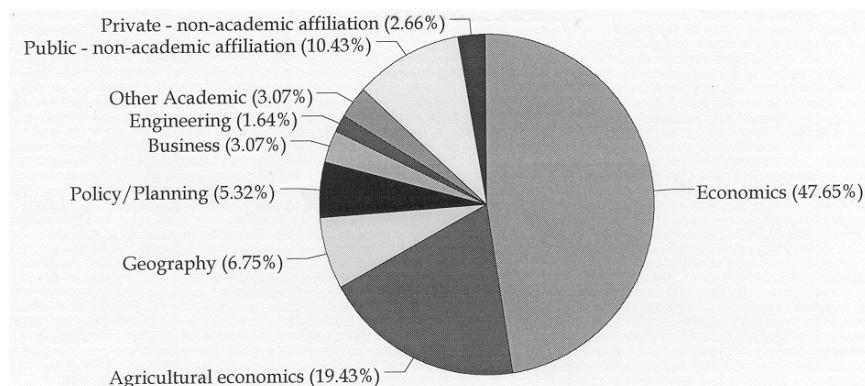


Figure 3. Employer affiliation of all authors at time of publication in the RSP/JRAP, 1971-1999. Multiple appearances included.

During the past 30 years, the Journal of Regional Analysis and Policy (formerly Regional Science Perspectives) has published 52 individual issues containing 341 articles and 35 reviews that account for roughly

5,500 pages of text. The themes addressed in the articles were wide ranging and representative of the breadth of topics addressed in regional science. The largest single categories of article themes addressed included development economics and industrial organization. The application of methods used by contributors has likewise been wide ranging; again, reflective of the breadth of analysis found in regional science. The most commonly applied methods relied on regression-based econometric models.

Contributors to the journal have included leaders in the field of regional science. In the paper, we have included a listing of the primary contributors with rankings of both total numbers of pages published and an adjusted number of pages published that accounts for multiple authorship. In summary, the contributors to the journal are predominantly university-based academics from the field of economics. There are, however, a growing number of authors whose academic homes include geography, business administration, public policy, and planning.

In terms of future opportunities, it would seem appropriate to take advantage of every opportunity to more vigorously promote the journal as a high quality research outlet for both academics and practitioners who delve into issues of regional analysis and public policy. Our intent is to continue encouragement of high quality research submissions from economics and applied economics while more effectively extending into the related regional science disciplines of public policy, planning, and public administration. Increasingly the number of high quality submissions is the single-most effective method to ensure quality of content in future publication.

With respect to demand aspects of the journal, efforts must also focus on increasing the presence of the journal through extending its subscription base. The Association's efforts to market itself can go hand-in-hand with promoting its official scholarly journal. This will continue to be an ongoing priority of the editors and the editorial board. We likewise encourage this to remain a high priority for the Association membership.

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