

# A Glimpse Behind the Scene of a Journey of Thousand Miles

Tayyaba Gul Malik<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ameer-ud-Din Medical College/Post Graduate Medical Institute/Lahore General Hospital, Lahore

“Journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step”. That single step for a thousand miles journey, of getting international recognition for Pakistan Journal of Ophthalmology (PJO), has been taken. It has been more than two years since the complete shifting of Pakistan Journal of Ophthalmology to online journal management system using open journal systems. Since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020, PJO has been online on the first date of every quarter without any delay. Definitely, this did not happen in a day or two. A lot of hard work with sleepless nights of many is involved behind this achievement. It has been a roller coaster ride with so many hurdles. What readers see is only tip of the iceberg. The persistence, late nights, hard work, sacrifices, struggle, doubts, risks, criticism and courage with all the associated cardiac arrhythmias of the editor in chief/editor remain hidden from the readers.

An editor-in-chief/editor is a person who has to answer the indexing agencies, authors, reviewers, readers, publishers and of course the organization which runs the journal. I must admit that, it was not until I was actually in the shoe of an editor that I realized how tedious this task was. This small piece of work might give our readers a glimpse of efforts of our laborious and adventurous excursion of many years.

Keeping aside all the activities involved in online journal management, I shall start with the submission of a manuscript in PJO. The first barrier for a

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Tayyaba Gul Malik  
Ameer-ud-Din Medical College/Post Graduate Medical Institute/Lahore General Hospital, Lahore

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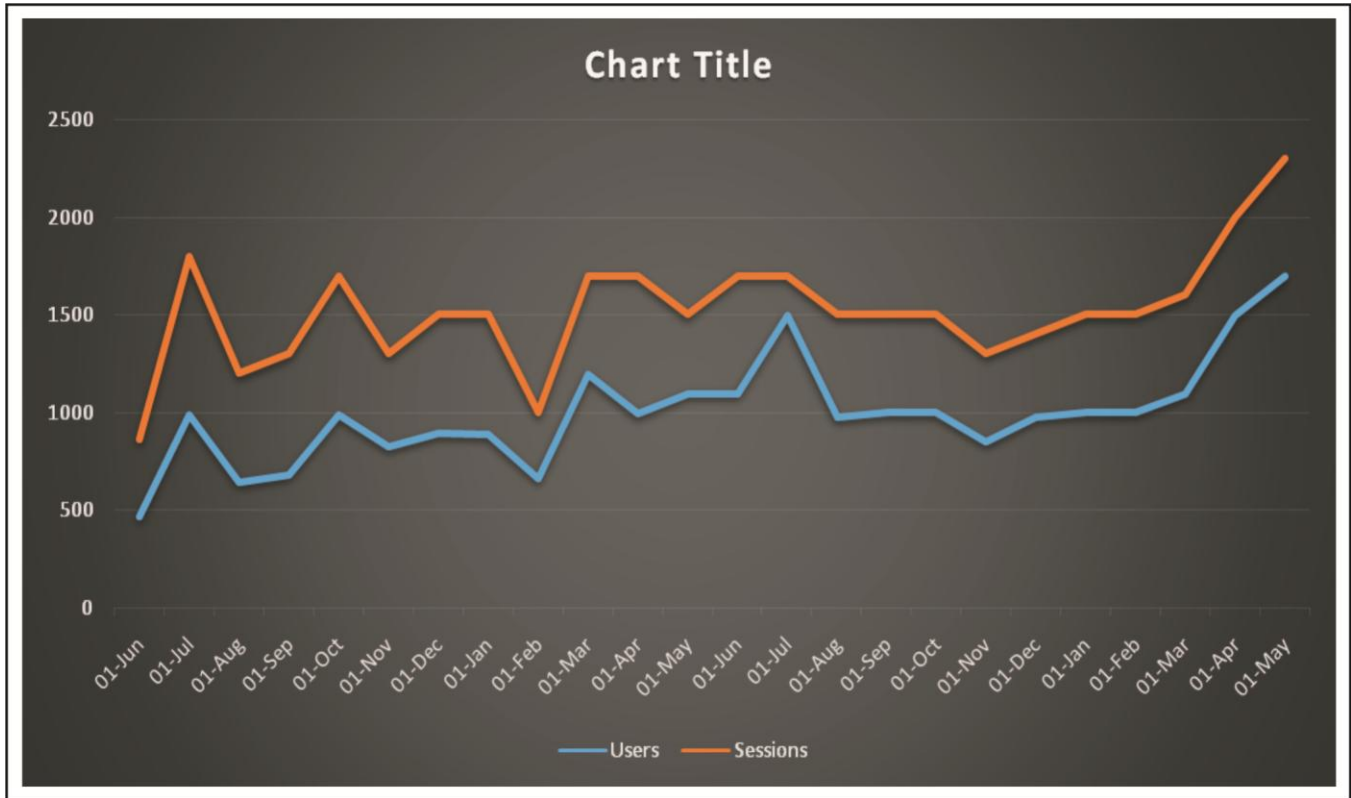
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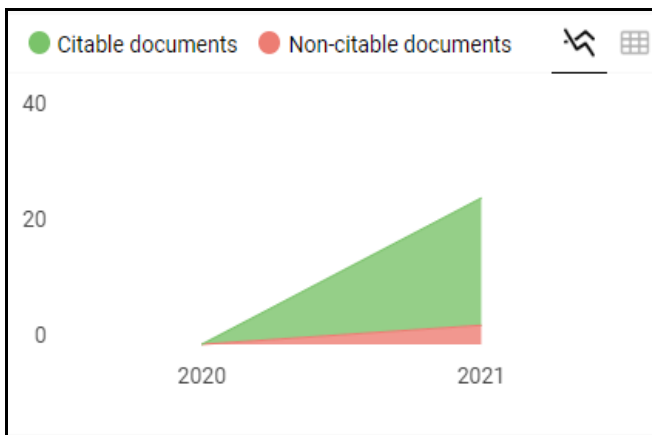
manuscript to cross, is the ‘editorial triage’. Editors are very rightly said the **GATE KEEPERS** of a journal.<sup>1,2</sup> Everyone knows that gate keeping is an uphill battle and it holds true for us; the editors. After submission, a manuscript undergoes an initial scrutiny, which includes scope, manuscript’s title, headings, authorship, references and a long exhaustive list to be checked. Once passed this step, the article is checked for plagiarism (should be less than 17% according to HEC guidelines). Manuscripts, which pass this test, get a passport to be sent to a statistician for stat review.

Once a manuscript gets through the stat review, the time comes to find at least two reviewers for one manuscript. Finding and retaining good reviewers is itself a mountain trekking job.<sup>6</sup> We admit that reviewing an article is a difficult and honorary job and we owe to our reviewers who are dedicated, experts and competent. We are not yet at the stage of paying honorarium to the reviewers but as our readership will increase, we hope one day, we might be able to do that. Receiving reviewers’ comments and conveying to the authors, to make corrections accordingly, is another huge task. Next step is copyediting, inserting IRB numbers, authors’ contributions, conflicts of interests, acknowledgements etc. All this, is another important piece of work before the manuscript is sent for formatting. The final dummies are prepared by the publisher, which are re-checked by the editors before online release of the issue. Graham C<sup>7</sup> has calculated the time spent by an associate editor on a single manuscript as follows:

Task	Time Spent in Hours
Read and think about paper	1 – 2
Search for and invite initial reviewers	1
Handle review responses, and find replacement reviewers	1 – 2
Receive and process reviews	0.5
Chasing reviewers to deliver their reviews	1
Re-visit paper, and formulate recommendation	1



**Figure 1:** Number of users and sessions starting from June 2020 (left most) to May 2022 (right most) showing a gradual increase during last two years. (Source: Google analytics).



**Figure 2:** Graph from Schimago Journal and Country Ranking for Pakistan Journal of Ophthalmology.<sup>8</sup> (<https://www.scimagojr.com/journalsearch.php?q=66030&tip=sid&cl=ean=0>)

When added up, it comes to 6 to 8 hours per manuscript.

In addition to this exhaustive workflow, we have to continuously work for the journal recognition and indexation. PJO is in the Y category of HEC and is

recently recognized by College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan for completing FCPS-II examination requirement. PJO is also included in Directory of Open Access Journals and SCOPUS. Schimago Journal Ranking for the year 2021 was 0.104. Work for COPE and Web of Science has already been started. We are striving hard, to work on the lines of pubmed central as well and it is a mountainous task. Our team is working with dedication to achieve this milestone. With indexation, number of users and number of sessions are also gradually increasing (Figure 1). Competing in the world of mushrooming journals is not an easy task. We shall leave no stone unturned to lift this journal. Raising the standard of local manuscripts is our priority. This can be done by regular workshops on research and research paper writing. There are sessions on research paper writing in our local conferences but that has to be brought to the grass root level in every institution. Only then, a bigger change can be anticipated.

We are living in the era of online marketing and advertisement. Even the high impact journals with

millions of readership are using social media services like facebook, twitter, LinkedIn etc for this purpose. This has also been included in our next year's plan.

Human resource development is also a part of successful journey of a journal. University of health sciences has been the leaders in editor training course. They have started certification for editors of medical journals and plan to move towards masters in medical journalism. It is a source of great pride for PJO that Editor in chief and the editor have completed this course from UHS and also received Dr. Maqbool A Jafry Award in Certificate in Medical Editing. Advanced course of medical journalism and editing is still on the go.

We have a long way to go and this cannot be done by a single person. It needs hard work not only at the editors, authors and the reviewers end, rather it also needs co-operation from the OSP office bearers. We faced financial issues during the COVID times. These issues have been solved to some extent but the sustainability of the journal requires more finances to compete with the world class journals.

**"Success is not final; failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts."**

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## Author's Designation and Contribution

Tayyaba Gul Malik; Professor: *Literature search, manuscript drafting, review and final approval.*

