

A Primer on JMD's Reviewing and Publication Process

While JMD follows closely the general ASME Journals publication process, we have some features in our process that tend to be specific to our journal. Every month, some new authors and readers join the JMD community, and it is good to familiarize them with the workings of the journal. Since our processes do change with time, even old hands in the JMD community may need some refresher. I have devoted several past editorials on the philosophy and practices of JMD's reviewing process. These can be found in our dedicated site [asmejmd.org](http://asmejmd.org/editorials.php) (<http://asmejmd.org/editorials.php>). Here, I would like to offer a short primer on what our basic processes are, where to direct questions, and what to expect from the time you submit a manuscript to its eventual publication.

Each manuscript (MS) must be submitted through ASME's Journal Tool (jtool): <http://journaltool.asme.org/Content/index.cfm>. Almost all subsequent reviewing transactions are recorded through the jtool. I cannot make determinations on whether an MS is suitable for JMD unless the MS is fully submitted to the jtool. When authors send me emails with titles, abstracts, or even full text, my response is to ask them to make a formal submission. It takes little extra effort, and it allows me to keep good records.

I make an initial review of a MS within a few days. I may decide that the MS is not suitable for further review for a variety of reasons, most often because the topic or the treatment of the topic does not fit the JMD scope. In this case, I may "return" the manuscript to the authors, explaining that no further action will be taken or I may "re-assign" it to another ASME journal that seems to me more suitable. The jtool will generate an appropriate email informing the author of this action. If I decide that the MS is suitable for JMD review, I select an associate editor (AE) and I assign the MS to him or her based on the topic of the MS, their expertise, and their MS review load at the time.

Sometimes, I may require advice on a manuscript's suitability for JMD from one of my associate editors who may have deeper expertise. I may also require that some changes be made to the manuscript prior to commencing the next review step, for example, improving the explanation of the design content of the paper or improving the quality of English language usage in the text. I do this when I believe that the inherent suitability and quality of the MS are reasonable. In all such cases, I make the AE assignment, and I inform the authors that this is a provisional assignment and that a further reviewing decision will depend upon the feedback I get from the AEs and their own submission of a revised manuscript. The authors have the option to withdraw their paper at that point if they are not willing to make the requested changes. In fact, the authors have the right to withdraw their paper at any time using the jtool, although it is an expected courtesy to inform me of their reasoning.

Once these are settled, AEs assign the MS to two to four peer reviewers at their discretion. Typically, we seek three reviews so we can have a broader input, particularly if the reviewers' recommendations do not agree. This is the lengthiest part of the process, requiring reminders and follow-up. An author can follow the

progress on the jtool but not always fully. For example, an AE may have sought unsuccessfully several reviewers (the steps then are assign, decline, and unassign) and the jtool may show at some instant of time that the AE has not started the reviewer assignment, although actually the AE is trying to secure reviewers. A recent change in the jtool allows a reviewer to agree with or decline a review request, thus making this process more efficient. As a rule, I expect that if you are a JMD author, for each paper you submit to JMD, you should accept and complete at least three review requests in a timely manner.

When AEs have enough review information, they will send me their recommendation. The nature of this recommendation is not communicated to the authors. AEs may request the authors for revisions and conduct another review cycle prior to making their final publication recommendation to me. When I receive an AE recommendation, I look at the paper, the reviews, and the AE recommendation and make the final decision. If a positive publication decision is made, usually I will ask for some additional revisions. JMD has developed a specific checklist for the authors that must be completed and submitted to my editorial assistant. This has proven very valuable on helping streamline the process and avoiding delays. My assistant reviews the final MS and checklist submitted, usually for formatting and other publication specifications. I review these as well as the changes made to the MS and the authors' explanations of these changes. In that stage, the potential for delay is high. A paper that has been accepted in principle may become significantly delayed when the authors do not make the requested changes or make them in a perfunctory manner, thus prompting several rounds of revisions in the final manuscript prior to the final approval. Careful editing is critical for the final MS approval, and it is the authors' responsibility to get this done right. Occasionally, I request authors to get professional editorial help. In fact, if the authors have received significant editorial help from a professional service, it is appropriate and expected to indicate that in the Acknowledgment section of the MS.

When I approve the final MS for publication, the MS leaves the jtool system and goes into a separate ASME journal production process. The ASME staff and the typesetting vendor manage this production. The vendor provides limited copy editing (i.e., text corrections). The PDF of a typeset MS (the "galley proofs" of old days) is sent to the authors for final approval. Once that is returned, the approved MS is finally published. The publication is done immediately online and later in print form in the appropriate issue. For JMD, a DOI is now assigned immediately following the editor's final MS approval, and a preprint copy is placed online as soon as possible. This allows early referencing to new work that has been approved for publication.

Although production is done centrally, we still track how the JMD manuscripts progress through the system. The editor's assistant communicates with ASME to resolve various issues, from inadequate figures to missing copyright forms to outright tardiness of authors to respond. The editor's assistant is the unsung hero of the entire review and production process, tracking timely actions

by editors, reviewers, authors, co-authors, and other staff, as well as making sure that every step in the process is executed properly.

Among ASME journals, JMD has the privilege of a dedicated website at asmejmd.org maintained by AE Matt Parkinson, to whom I am always grateful. This site was created to allow easy access to several pieces of information dispersed in the central ASME journal website. It supplements the jtool and the ASME digital library site for JMD: <http://asmedl.aip.org/MechanicalDesign/>. It is a forum for direct communication with the JMD community. I invite you to visit it whenever you have questions and to let me know what other topics we may address in that site that would be useful to the community.

One of my past editorials, posted on asmejmd.org as I mentioned above, is titled “A Manuscript’s Journey,” and I frequently

direct to it authors’ requests regarding “what’s happening to my paper?” While in the past year we maintained an average of 2.5 months for publication decisions and 4.5 months for final MS approvals for 455 submissions, these average rates can be misleading because many submitted papers do not go through the full review process. Our commitment to complete reviews of all papers under six months can only be sustained if all parties continue their high level of timely contribution, for which we are all grateful.

Panos Y. Papalambros
Editor