

## Managing an Economic Journal Efficiently: Trends and Challenges



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What are the changes that happen to the context in which a national economic journal is developing? What new flows and trends shape the journal agenda today? What impact do they have on editorial policy and is there a tool to assess the effectiveness of managing scientific periodicals?

Such controversial issues were raised at one of the meetings of the Section of Economic Journals of the Association of Science Editors and Publishers (ASEP) held on April 25, 2019 within the framework of the 8th International Scientific and Practical Conference “World-Class Scientific

Publication – 2019: Strategy and Tactics of Management and Development”.

The participants of the section – leading economists, representatives of the editorial offices of Russian economic publications and administrators of science – discussed the introduction of new practices to promote and increase the citation of domestic publications. The round table was moderated by *O.O. Medvedeva*, Chairperson of the Section of Economic Journals of the ASEP and *A.O. Zhuk*, Secretary of the Section of Economic Journals of the ASEP (RANEPA).

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In their speech, the moderators made an overview of the latest innovations in the scientific world; the innovations are related to the fact that Western practice of publishing preprints of articles in open databases and specialized repositories is being gradually disseminated in the Russian academic community. This practice, despite its wide popularity in the foreign scientific and publishing community, causes a mixed reaction on the part of the Russian academic community. The experience of research work shows that some journals refuse to accept a manuscript on this basis, since they perceive it as part of the unfair practice of replicating the publication by its author. In this regard, the speakers tried to reveal such concept as “preprint”<sup>1</sup> in detail, its importance in terms of development and promotion of scientific knowledge, as well as the specifics of the attitude toward preprints in the Western scientific publishing environment. According to O. Medvedeva, the first thing that can be done in order to change the attitude of domestic scientists and publishers toward preprints is to describe in detail the editorial policy to address such practices and make this information publicly available on the website of the publication. According to the analysis of the data on open access publications in the RSCI, the information on the practice of publishing preprints is available at the websites of only 4.76% of open access economic journals. A survey of editorial representatives has shown that up to 70% of the respondents have a negative attitude toward this practice. However, the growing popularity of preprints requires journals to provide more detail and be more precise when describing their editorial policy. As a result of the discussion, the participants and speakers were invited to *get acquainted with* the Declaration “Preprints in Russian Economic Science” in order to support the introduction of the popular European practice of publishing articles based on preprints posted in the public domain, as well as to submit their

<sup>1</sup> Preprint is a text placed in the public domain before publication in a peer-reviewed scientific journal.

comments and suggestions.

*E.V. Balatsky and N.A. Ekimova* (Center for Macroeconomic Research of the Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation) – leading experts in the field of scientific journals ratings – spoke about new trends in ranking scientific economic journals. The point is that the focus in the approach to a unified assessment of a journal’s quality has shifted virtually in the course of one year. If until recently the very fact of a journal’s indexing in an international database (WoS and/or Scopus), regardless of quartile or percentile, was considered as the highest score, then now there is a trend toward assessing a publication on the basis of changes in its ranking positions within international scientific databases (ISDB); it becomes necessary to take into account the quartile of the domestic edition. The second new imperative in the evaluation of a journal is the awareness of domestic editors that if the journal has Russian-language content, it can be admitted into international databases, but it cannot move inside them. It is almost impossible to get into the first and second quartiles if a journal has only a Russian version; it must have at least a full-scale English version. These circumstances led to a change in the algorithm for constructing the rating. Additional coefficients were calculated, taking into account the quartile of the journal in the ISDB and the availability of the English version of the content. The final ranking results reflect the actual success of the journal in the domestic market and its potential success in the external market. The ranking methodology and the list of leading economic journals are presented in detail in the article published in the previous issue of our journal<sup>2</sup>.

At the end of their presentation, the speakers made a forecast that in the near future domestic authors will almost exhaust their ability to publish

<sup>2</sup> See: Balatsky E.V., Ekimova N.A. Competition of Russian economic journals in the world market. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 2019, vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 124–139. DOI: 10.15838/esc.2019.3.63.8

their papers in Russian journals that have entered the “foreign market”<sup>3</sup>; it is due to the increase in the number of international authors in the portfolio of articles: for example, in 2018, 60.7% of the content of the journal *Forsait* (Foresight and STI Governance) was represented by foreign researchers.

*A.A. Peresetsky*, deputy editor-in-chief of the journal *Prikladnaya ekonometrika* (Applied Econometrics), delivered a report in the context of studying the mechanisms for domestic journals promotion in international rankings. The speaker conducted a study on the procedures for mechanical citation counting on the basis of the data obtained from the thematic (economic) international database RePEc<sup>4</sup>. It is known that one of the main problems of Russian science consists in the lack of citation of Russian-language texts in the international space. Many actions have already been taken to deal with this problem: bilingual journals and hybrid versions are issued, English-language versions of journals are created; besides, there are original versions of publications in a foreign language that accept papers of domestic researchers exclusively in English. However, there are also certain simple actions that do not require serious additional funding; they can and should be taken by the editor of any journal to prevent the “loss of citations”. The editor should verify the references in reference lists; the data for citation should be posted on the website of the publication. Sometimes, directly in the process of citation, the name of the journal in which this article will be published is indicated incorrectly in the lists of references. It is important that the editor should take into account the requirements of ISDB to reference lists and be guided by specialized international databases on economics, because today all this helps to succeed in promoting a Russian journal in the international scientific community.

<sup>3</sup> I. e. authoritative world-class journals indexed in ISDB and characterized by dynamic movement by quartiles within the databases.

<sup>4</sup> Research Papers in Economics.

For example, *T. Yu. Kuznetsova*, editor of the journal *Baltiiskii Region* and its English version, *Baltic Region*, shared her experience in publishing and promoting a journal, which has a translated version<sup>5</sup>. The success factors in this case include, first of all, a thoughtful approach to the project, since it was planned from the very beginning that the periodical would be published in two versions; thus, the editor adopted different ways of development for both publications, despite their identical content. The original Russian-language journal has gradually entered into the core of the RSCI and the RSCI on the Web of Science platform; and the English version was indexed in Scopus and WoS ESCI, both versions are indexed in DOAJ and ERIH+. This approach is most interesting for “young” publications that have never been indexed in any ISDB before. However, when choosing this approach, editors should take into account the need for two types of the most serious and costly work in the journal: first, to pay maximum attention to the quality of English and Russian translation; second, to streamline the procedure of synchronous page layout: if the article in the English version is on pages 1–17, then the page numbers in the Russian version of this article should be the same. The procedure helps preserve citation and develop a competent strategy to promote the publication. The use of modern technologies in the form of DOI<sup>6</sup> also avoids the binary perception of the data on articles by ISDB robots. Summing up her speech, T.Yu. Kuznetsova formulated two main advantages of publishing a journal in two versions. The first advantage is the availability of articles both to international readers and to Russian scientists who do not speak fluent English; the second one is expressed in effective practices of expanding the circle of peer reviewers, because almost every reviewer is an author, and every author is a reviewer.

<sup>5</sup> That is, a journal, which publishes its original version in Russian and an analogous full version in English.

<sup>6</sup> The same DOI is assigned to the article in Russian and to its English translation.

*N.A. Gavrilicheva* (editor responsible for promoting the journal *Forsait/Foresight and STI Governance* in the international scientific space) spoke about the experience in the development and promotion of their journal, which also has a translated version, but it was founded after the Russian version was admitted to ISDB. *Forsait* was one of the pioneers in designing and promoting two versions of the publication, but its Russian version had been included in Scopus before the English version was founded, and in the future this fact caused a number of considerable difficulties. The second and almost insurmountable difficulty was the forced need to change the English-language name of the journal, since the similar name already existed and was used by another international publisher. Both of these “peculiarities” resulted in the fact that two profiles of the journal were created in Scopus, and its citations were lost due to the splitting of the data, etc. What followed was a long period of negotiations and hearings with experts from Scopus, during which it was necessary to prove that the two profiles belonged to a single edition. The single profile in ISDB was formed after almost three years of the efforts. The technical procedure for creating two versions of the journal coincides with the one previously described by T.Yu. Kuznetsova; it is interesting to note that the English version of the journal *Forsait* exists only in electronic form; this approach does not eliminate the procedure of layout and the cost of it, but reduces the publishing costs of printing the English version. The English-language edition is printed in minimum quantity for the purposes of presenting the journal at foreign events and in communication with foreign authors.

The editor also pays much attention to the promotion of the publication from the technical perspective, which implies creating a mobile application and electronic edition for the journal; and from the social perspective, when the representatives of the editorial staff are actively involved in scientific discussions, lectures, seminars, round tables, conferences;

they promote the journal in social media, try to monitor and participate in new international events on the topics of the journal, and organize their own events. Such a multilateral approach to the promotion of the publication allows *Forsait* to occupy a leading position in the economic field of scientific knowledge.

O.V. Tret'yakova shared her experience in implementing promising practices in the journal *Ekonomicheskie i sotsial'nye peremeny: fakty, tendentsii, prognoz* and its English version *Economic and Social Changes*. In managing the journal in 2010, its editorial staff began to use a new tool, which has proved its effectiveness over the years. Formally, this tool is a survey that includes open-ended and closed-ended questions; the questionnaires are sent on behalf of the editor-in-chief to respondents in order to receive feedback on the quality of articles and to collect suggestions concerning the development and promotion of the journal. Members of the Editorial Board, editorial staff, reviewers, authors, readers, and the staff of Vologda Research Center (the founder of the journal) take part in the survey. All the information in the filled-in questionnaires is structured and used by the editors to prepare the analytics on the dynamic performance of the publications and to revise the annual plan of the journal's goals, taking into account the proposals.

The survey reveals how the readership of the journal assesses the scientific level of its materials, evaluates the work of the editorial staff and the changes the journal is undergoing. According to the speaker, it is important that the feedback the scientific journal receives can act as a tool that allows articles to be reviewed after they have been published. For this purpose, the questionnaire contains a question about the choice of articles that, in the opinion of respondents, are most interesting. Experts can give each publication a short comment, noting both its strengths and points of discussion that require a different view. By collecting this information, the editors form an annual impact rating of published articles.

The results of this post-review allow the editor to manage the content and thematic focus of new issues of the journal effectively.

Respondents' suggestions concerning the promotion and development of the journal are an important outcome of the annual expert evaluation of the journal. Speaking about the practices of promoting the English version of the journal, O.V. Tret'yakova mentioned several directions that the journal's editors had implemented at the suggestion of foreign members of the Editorial Board and the editorial staff. For example, the editors arranged the distribution of the journal to foreign national libraries, and now it is represented in the collections of the Library of Congress and the German National Library of Economics. At the same time, participation in foreign conferences helps strengthen the journal's position in the international scientific community: for example, the journal acted as a "supporting journal" at the conferences in Italy, Slovenia, and Croatia. Moreover, the journal became an official partner of the European School of Social Innovation, and the experience it acquired in the course of direct cooperation with ESSI is of considerable importance, as well.

Summing up, O.V. Tret'yakova named the factors that ensure the effectiveness of expert assessment in a scientific journal; the main one is to implement this assessment on a system basis.

*T.A. Lapina* – executive editor of the journal *Vestnik Omskogo universiteta. Seriya "Ekonomika"* (Herald of Omsk University. Series Economics) – continued speaking on the topic related to

the implementation of effective management principles. Her presentation was devoted to the difficulties in and prospects for the development of a regional journal. In this case, the main difficulties are often caused by the absence of goal-setting in the journal and, as a consequence, by chaotic actions of the editor, which can hardly be called a development strategy. From the standpoint of promotion, the journal strives to be as accessible to authors and readers as possible; in this regard, it adheres to the principles of open access, guarantees free publication and openness of content in the ELS, databases and repositories. Mostly these advantages drew the attention of the participants of a survey conducted by the journal's editors in 2018. On the other hand, the journal already has good performance indicators in the RSCI and strives to move forward and meet the requirements of ISDB. Perhaps now this is already enough to improve the application of effective practices of managing a journal.

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The participants of the section thanked the speakers for the applied nature of their reports, due to which it became possible to share practical experience in the course of the discussion. The speakers expressed the general opinion that, despite new challenges and threats, Russian editors constantly get new opportunities to promote and develop the tools for managing their publication effectively. The reports offered specific cases on the development of journal administration practices and its promotion in the international scientific community.

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