

# Some Aspects of Running a Free Electronic Journal

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## **Introduction**

In this note, we present some observations about the publication of free electronic journals. In particular, we consider the Electric Journal of Differential Equations.

## **Growth**

With the goal of providing free access to mathematical research, several e-journals started operations in the early 1990's. To mention just some of the first peer reviewed e-journals to appear, we have: Ulam Quarterly Journal, Electronic Journal of Differential Equations (EJDE), Electronic Transactions in Numerical Analysis (ETNA), Electronic Journal of Combinatorics (EJC). The Ulam Journal stopped production after a few years. However, the others continue to grow, as shown by the number of annual publications. The EJDE published 125 and rejected 146 manuscript in 2003, which is a number significantly larger than the 8 articles published in the first year of operations, 1993.

We should point out that the size of free journals is constrained mostly by the amount of time the editors are willing to invest in their journals.

## **Delay between submission and publication**

The time elapsed between submission and acceptance/rejection for print and electronic journals is about the same. This is so because the peer reviewing process is the same, except probably for e-journals using e-mail in most communications. For the EJDE, the average time between submission and acceptance/rejection is 120 days.

As expected, the time elapsed between acceptance and publication is notably shorter for e-journals than for print journals: At the EJDE it averages 8 days, while for print journal can be months or years. A table of journals and their time elapsed between submission and publication is published annually in the Notices of the American Mathematical Society (usually in the September issue).

### Cost to sponsoring intuitions

The main cost of sponsoring an e-journal is the release time given to managing-editors: It is estimated that a manuscript requires from 1 to 3 labor hours for obtaining referee reports and deciding on its acceptance or rejection. The actual publication takes from 1 to 8 labor hours, depending on how much text editing is needed to make the manuscript meet the standards of the journal.

### World wide reach

Free e-journals have been well received in several countries, as judged by the address of authors. In the EJDE between 2000 and 2004, 655 authors registered addresses as follows:

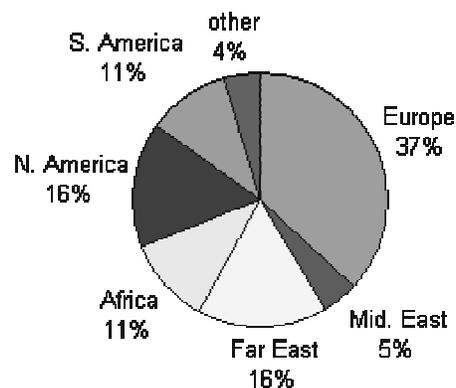


Figure 6: Geographic location of EJDE authors

**Africa 72:** Algeria 26, Cameroon 2, Egypt 1, Morocco 28, Tunisia 15.

**Middle East 30:** Israel 15, Jordan 1, Lebanon 1, Saudi Arabia 12, UAE 1.

**South America 70:** Argentina 11, Brazil 44, Chile 6, Colombia 7, Ecuador 2.

**Europe 239:** Austria 3, Belgium 1, Bulgaria 11, Croatia 7, Czech Republic 13, Finland 4, France 56, Georgia 1, Germany 16, Greece 21, Hungary 4, Italy 37, Moldova 5, Norway 7, Poland 3, Portugal 2, Romania 21, Scotland 1, Slovakia 3, Spain 14, Sweden 4, Switzerland 1, U.K. 4.

**North America 110:** Canada 12, Mexico 7, USA 91.

**Far East 106:** China 57, India 15, Japan 16, Korea 6, Nepal 1, Pakistan 1, Taiwan 4, Vietnam 6.

**Other 28:** Australia 5, Russia 15, Uzbekistan 1.

Note that some countries having population smaller than the USA have large ratio of publications (USA 91/655, France 56/655). At the AMS-Smm conference in Houston 2004, the following explanation was suggested: Publishing in e-journals is not given the same importance as in print journals in certain countries. This may discourage researchers from submitting articles to e-journals.

### **How can we help free e-journals?**

As faculty members serving on tenure and promotion committees, we should consider publications in e-journals as valid publications. As researchers, we should referee manuscripts when asked to do so (within the allocated time). As mathematicians, we should encourage our colleagues and students to access free e-journals and to submit manuscripts.

On the other hand, for those who want to start e-journals, I'll be glad to offer a list of suggestions as a managing editor.

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