

2022

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Recommended Citation

Bing-You, Robert; Carr, Devin; Falank, Carolyne; Hayes, Vicki; McKelvy, Dina; and Bailey, Charlotte (2022) "How Do You Measure the Success of a New Journal Launch?," *Journal of Maine Medical Center*. Vol. 4 : Iss. 1 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://knowledgeconnection.mainehealth.org/jmmc/vol4/iss1/1> <https://doi.org/10.46804/2641-2225.1124>

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How Do You Measure the Success of a New Journal Launch?

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FROM THE EDITORS

How Do You Measure the Success of a New Journal Launch?

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The first issue of the *Journal of Maine Medical Center (JMMC)* was released in 2019.

Launching a new open access journal is no minor feat. There is an incredible amount of background work and forethought that must occur before its release. Questions have to be answered: Is there a need or niche to fill? Is the journal sustainable? Who is the target audience? How will the journal be funded? How do you secure institutional support? There are also decisions to be made about journal policies, submission types, marketing, recruiting authors and reviewers, selecting editorial board members, and creating the journal portal. And worries have to be considered: If you build it, will they come? How do you welcome submissions from all but sustain high quality? How do you expand and build impact, but keep a regional, community focus?

And how do you know that you have been successful?

We began creating the journal by first formulating a mission statement and objectives. The aim of *JMMC* is to support the academic mission. It naturally follows that *JMMC* should not only disseminate scholarly work but should also be the focus of scholarly investigation. Our editorial team was particularly interested in the potential impact of starting a new journal. A literature search on journal impact revealed very little beyond traditional impact factors or citation data. To understand the impact of *JMMC*, we designed a qualitative study that involved interviewing *JMMC* authors and reviewers about their experience with the journal, its effect on their professional identity, and its perceived impact on the institution's academic mission.

A summary of our key findings include:

- In assessing a new open access journal, author and reviewer perceptions of value can offer insights that reach beyond traditional impact data. For example, the support of trainees and novice participants was cited as a much-appreciated attribute of *JMMC*. Also particularly valued were the journal's personal communication style and the quality of reviewer and editor feedback.
- A new institutional journal can help to shape professional identity formation. Our participants encompassed diverse professional backgrounds and career stages. They appreciated the opportunities to gain experience in the publication process and the inspiration and pride they generated through participating. Career progression was not a major motivator. The primary incentive cited for involvement was a desire to support the new journal and the institution.
- A new academic journal may positively influence the educational culture of an institution. Many participants mentioned a desire to disseminate information locally and build a community of like-minded scholars. All authors felt that *JMMC* positively impacted the academic mission. Both authors and reviewers cited lack of time and compensation as primary challenges. They also expressed hope for continued efforts toward expanding reach and increasing the impact factor over time.

For full details on our findings, please read our publication entitled, “Impact of a new institutional medical journal on professional identity development and academic cultural change: a qualitative study” in *Learned Publishing*, 2021 (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/leap.1407>).

We are releasing our sixth *JMMC* issue—that in itself is an accomplishment! We have published a broad range of submission types, built a respectable repository of high-quality reviewers, and supported authors with a range of levels of experience.

One of the inaugural issue manuscripts, “Increasing actual and perceived burden of tick-borne diseases in Maine,”¹ is the most frequently downloaded article. *JMMC* content has been downloaded by health care, education, government, and commercial organizations in 129 countries. We have readership on every continent. Despite this robust distribution, the journal maintains its mission to support academic and rural medicine. To this end, *JMMC* has published research, case studies, or application of best practices on topics ranging from physician gender impact on obesity² to learning to use inclusive language in equitable health care.^{3,4}

But have we met our aim of supporting the academic mission? The short answer is that we have made a great start!

What are our future goals?

- Submit a MEDLINE application to index the journal in PubMed
- Increase marketing and communication
- Improve author and reviewer competencies
- Apply the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion lens to our processes

Thank you all for your support of *JMMC*!

***JMMC* Editorial Team**

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